TURTLE'S EXPEDITION RESCRIBBLED

VOLUME 2

:OLD FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

TURTLEDOODLE1

SUPERTAILS32

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CHAPTER 11: A NEW ERA

"I cannot believe it has already been 8 months since my life changed forever. To be frank, I'm not entirely sure on how to feel. It feels just like yesterday when I met with this fisherman guy named Bushra. It all started because I wanted to win a prize from a competition. Who knew it would all lead up to... this. We had a falling out when we escaped from the clutches of Hood, what an evil bastard she was."

"After trying to get what was rightfully mine by brute force, we accidentally broke the gem on the trophy. To be honest, I don't remember what else went down that day. It all feels like a distant memory. I do remember meeting with Sarpo, an old MPC (Magic Protector Camp) member while running away from those hoodsters, minions of Hood. He told us that we needed to destroy all of Hood's bases in order to achieve world peace which we both agreed on. We had a few clashes against Hood until we met up with Sarpo's old... (girlfriend?), Ms. Meow. Sarpo uses her real name to refer to her but he doesn't like it when we use that to refer to her. I think it was something like... "Clay"? I'm not sure, really. After we met her alongside her gang of "Travelers". We parted ways to continue destroying bases. It was going smoothly until Sarpo was captured by Hood and her hoodsters. I remember being very scared that day. Thankfully Bushra was right there beside me to cheer me up... in his own unique way at least. I don't know what happened to Sarpo while he was captured but one thing was for sure, it probably wasn't a pleasant experience."

"After that, we destroyed another base in which we almost didn't make it out alive. It was probably our hardest challenge yet. Bushra even got cool water powers from that encounter. To help me, poor Bushra went to Mercia to get me medical supplies. He even brought a survivor along, I didn't recognize him at first but then I realized that he was also from Mercia, a person called Artender. We welcomed him to the group and continued our journey with The

Mountain That Never Ends (Ugh, why is the name so unnecessarily long?!) I don't remember much of that place but Artender told us that we were... high? That was a strange way of explaining it. Anyway, afterwards, we tried to read the ancient text written by our ancestors. And I had a very weird dream, it felt like I was two people at the same time. I don't even know how to properly describe it. If my friends didn't tell me something was up, I wouldn't have even known of this. But regardless, I got a cool hammer power from it, so... 50/50? But after all of that, we finally reached the final base. Everything was going according to plan until Hood had to show up and summon this ancient evil sorcerer called Xtress. It was a very difficult fight, we almost got killed... multiple times in fact. But thankfully, me and Bushra managed to take him out and the people of Perdiah also helped us do the final blow. Hood tried to escape after everything went down but Sarpo caught her just in time. I legitimately thought it was all over for good until Sarpo told me about these weird occurrences happening on Christmas Day. But that isn't my problem right now. I have been trying to help everyone but I just want to relax a bit with Bushra."

"Speaking of whom, where is Bushra?"

It was yet another peaceful day on Planet Perdiah. It's been 6 months since Christmas and nothing major happened since then. Or so he thought. There was a simple minded guy fishing by himself near a lake, hoping to catch a fish. It's been a long time since he went fishing by himself. Ever since he met a random stranger in a forest, his life changed forever. Even though he liked what he had right now; he wished his life stayed simple like before. His thoughts were interrupted when suddenly;

Bushra!
Where are you, dude?

(Sigh) I'm right here, G.
What do you want?

(worried) I prepared breakfast for us but I couldn't find you inside our house.
(embarrassed) I was wondering where you went, that's all!

Heh. I understand, G.

So um... do you want something to eat?

No thanks.
I already ate fish for breakfast.

You know that's unhealthy, dude.

Well, let ME decide on that.
You are not my babysitter, G.

You are acting grumpier than ever recently.
What gives?

Bushra decides to acts genuine towards G for a change.

Look, G. I just needed to have some alone time, okay?
You wouldn't understand...

Like how exactly?
We got into this mess together!

We should still stick together after all we have experienced!

...hmpf.
* takes a breath and changes the topic for their own sake *
So... what are you planning on doing today?
* giggles *
Show me another comically large poster?

Ugh, don't remind me.
Apparently Sarpo will make an announcement later today.

Again with that guy?
He makes announcements every other week!

Aww, be nice to him!
He just wants us to come too.

Fine. Whatever.
Just help me carry this bucket to the apartment first.

* grabs the bucket *
Okie dokie!

Heh. Thanks buddy.
* takes a breath *
Yeah, let's go.
I had my fill.

Alright then.
Say, want to grab a popsicle before we meet up with them?

Sure, buddy.
I'm gonna pay for us both though.

(surprised and confused) Oh? Are you sure?

%100.

Um... thanks dude?

The two go on their merry way to the ice cream truck. After buying their popsicles and putting the bucket inside their apartment, the two go to where Sarpo called them. There was a huge crowd waiting for Sarpo's new announcement. Those poor people... Even though everyone stayed together for Christmas, people just wanted to go back to their respective homes and lives. Sarpo, alongside Cloe, went to the stage.

* checks if his microphone was working or not *
Check, check! One, two!
Alright, it's working.
(Ehem) Hello everyone! It's me, Sarpo from the old disbanded MPC!
Before we start, I would like to just say... Thank you all for being here!
It means a lot to me and my friend here.
As much as I would love to talk about my experiences with you all, I don't want to keep you all waiting.
So... ladies and gentlemen, allow me to announce that me and some of my associates here will be rebuilding MPC!
And our first job will be getting you guys safely to your homes!

We are deeply sorry that you had to wait for so long to get this news but I assure you, we tried to be as fast as possible.

He gives the microphone to Cloe so that she could continue the speech.

Hello everyone, I'm the showrunner of Circus Kurza and an associate of Sarpo.
Firstly, I would like to say that it feels so nice to see Travelers and Humans living side by side again!
I know that we tried so hard to achieve this peace before but I'm sure that, this time, things will go a lot more smoothly!
* takes a breath *
Onto the final point of discussion... for those who want to stay here, we are also building a city called "Diamond City".
We have high hopes for Perdiah's future and I hope all of you are as excited as we are!
* looks at the script on her hand *
So yeah, that was it!
Hope you have a good day everybody!
We will start moving tomorrow with the ones that would like to go back to their homes!

Everyone started clapping and then left the scene in less than 5 minutes. Bushra and G were still there, talking.

Huh.

"Huh" indeed, G.
"Huh" indeed.
* laughs *
I wonder who they are going to add to MPC 2...

Well…

Alright G, you are not telling me something.
I can tell just by looking at your face.
Can you PLEASE tell me what you are keeping secret!?

He didn't have to ask for too long because Sarpo and Cloe were already walking towards them.

Ay, hey Bushra!
How's it going?
It's been a while since we last talked.

(uninterested) How lovely. It's going... good-ish?
* looks at him *
Glad that you seem to be in better shape since the last time we spoke though.
Is there a reason you guys wanted to talk to us right now?

Actually, I was going to offer you guys something.

Bushra looks at G in the most frustrated way imaginable.

Would you two like to join MPC 2?

MPC2? Are you guys actually going with that name!?
I thought it was a joke!

It's… a work in progress name.
* changes the topic *
So do you guys agree to join?

…

…wait.
You didn’t know about this?
I thought G would have told you by know.

* tries to stay calm *
Oh so you DID know about all of this.
(angry) Why didn't you tell me sooner, my friend?

Um…

(surprised) Oh, so you didn't even tell him that we talked about MPC 2 on Christmas day too, G?

G hasn't seen Bushra this angry before. He knew he had to calm him down before things got worse.

(joking manner) Oh you know me!
Silly old me just forgot all about it!
Sorry Bushra, I will be more careful next time.

* calms himself down *
You don't need to lie straight to my face, G.
I won't lash out on you.
* looks at Sarpo *
Sorry, I'm not interested.
I would like to go back to my home in Mercia.

But Bushraaaaaaa!
Please join us! We can still have a ton of fun here!
I will even give you the lone time that you wanted... Please don't leave!

Hm… fine.
Don't know how you do it but you always convince me about this stuff.

Consider that a part of my charm.

I would call it a "curse" more than anything.

* interrupts them *
Alright so I'm writing you two's names on the list, yes?

YES!

Well, I guess we are resting for the day.
Tomorrow is going to be a big day!
* fixes his tie *
Say, do you want something for dinner Cloe?

Well, I have something in mind.
* blushes *
But I would much prefer it if you chose it.

The two continued talking while walking away. Team Bushra just

stood there and watched the sunset.

(passive aggressive) Is there something ELSE that I should be aware of, G?

Well... Sarpo told me that strange occurrences have been happening around Perdiah.
We don't know what is causing those either.
That's all I didn't tell you about. Sorry.

(Sigh) Let's go, G.
There is nothing else left to do here.

Sorry man... That was my mistake.

I frankly don't care, G.

* thinks of something to cheer him up *
How about we meet up with Artender and PotaTeo first?
Maybe that could cheer you up!

Those two?
Weren't they busy the last time we saw them?
You know, the whole lumberjack thing?

Oh, yeah! I completely forgot about that.
* puts his hand on his chin *
Still, it wouldn't hurt to give it a try!

I suppose so.
I have been wondering what he and the little potato man have been up to.

You said it!
Let's go meet with them then!
This way!

Team Bushra goes outside Diamond City to meet with the two. Even though G liked being a part of this new city, he still preferred living with nature. It didn't take them too long to find their shack however.

Huh, is that-

He sees Team Bushra approaching. Bushra waves at him in response.

Yo, how's it going Bushra?

It's going pretty smoothly ,buddy.

Sup, Artender!
Glad you were able to find your "hobby" after all this time!

Peh... thanks, dude.

PotaTeo jumps into Bushra's arms out of nowhere.

Aww, I missed you too little dude.

How's it going, G?
* chuckles *
Still trying to find your way around the city?

(embarrassed) It only happened ONE time, Artender.
Stop bringing that up!

Okay, okay.
So what brings you two here?

were just wondering what you guys were doing in these last 6 months aside from doing lumberjack stuff.

Well... I went to the supermarket to buy some treats for this little guy, learned how to to edit videos, joined MPC 2-

JOINED WHAT?!

MPC 2? You didn’t know?

I mean… YEAH!
I thought you guys would want to focus on your new lives as a lumberjacking duo instead!

Well I did think of that at first but then this little dude told me that he wanted to be an adventurer as well.
And I couldn't say "no" to him.

So... Here we are!
Excited to start working there tomorrow!
What did you guys do by the way?

Well, we joined MPC 2 as well.

Oh, that's cool.
I hope we can go on missions together as well!

PotaTeo jumps from Bushra's arms to the ground to do a little dance.

Looks like Teo agrees with me too!

But suddenly, Artender notices PotaTeo sleeping on the ground and picks him up.

Not a fan of leaving in the middle of something but do you guys have anything else to ask?
I need to carry Teo to his bed.
It's way past his bedtime.

No, nothing really.

Alright then. Have a good night, you two!
See you tomorrow at work!

You too!

The two started walking towards their home afterwards. G still felt bad about what happened at the announcement and wanted to talk with his best friend.

Um... Bushra?

Yes, G?

Are you... still mad at me?

No, not at all.

G was left confused after bracing himself for Bushra's shouting.

Wait, so... you aren't mad at me?

G, why would I get mad at you?

Well... I thought you just didn't like me.
Even our first meeting was a whole mess!
I thought you stayed just because you wanted it too...

Even though the last thing you said IS true… I would have to admit I kinda like you buddy.
You are a chill guy-

Aww, thank you-

I wasn't finished, - buddy.
As I was saying, you ARE a chill guy even though you can be annoying to deal with sometimes.

Ah.
Shucks.

Heh... Let's go home then, for real this time.
It’s getting cold out here!

G stands there, thinking about something before stopping Bushra on his tracks.

Hey Bushra!

What?

Would you like to go fishing tomorrow?

...where did you get the idea?

Well, you told me you wanted to go on a fishing trip with me on Christmas day.
And we never got to in these last few months.
So... What do you say?
Should we go for it?

Hm... I don't see why not!
But we have to attend the meeting with the others tomorrow first.
You are aware of that, right?

We can always go fishing afterwards though!

You got a point, G... You know what, let's do it!
It's been such a long time since I went fishing with a boat.
I miss the feeling of the ocean!

That's the spirit!
This is gonna be so much fun!

(in a playful manner) Hah, don't push your luck next time though!

Pfft… whatever you say, sir Bushra.

The two laugh as they enter their home, telling each other "goodnight".

Meanwhile somewhere else on Perdiah, two people were standing on top of a mountain while looking at the town under them.

(worried) Are you sure this is the right place?

Ah'm sure of it, the boss specifically told us to raid here.
Grab onto this bag for the time being, baldie.

I will be back in a bit.

She flies off with the new hang glider her partner built. She lands on top of the town mayor's house and proceeds to implant bombs on top of it. She quickly escapes from the town without being seen and the two watch as the building explodes.

Now's our chance!
Now drink this potion, try not to bump into anyone, okay?

Okay…

The two drink the potion and turn invisible. The people of Town Mile were freaking out over the attack and were trying to put out the fire. No one even noticed the two sneaking by. They stole all of their jewelry and proceeded to implant even more bombs around the town. Before any townsfolk could realize what was going on, all that remained of Town Mile was just a big crater.

The town is gone… just like that.

It sure is! That was so fun!
We should definitely do this tactic more often!

Pretty sure the boss told us that we should only use this as a last resort option.

Peh, joykill.

The two started walking away from the crime scene that they just created while still arguing with each other. No one residing in Town

Mile survived the attack. It was a perfect raid.

CHAPTER 12: FISHING TRIP

It was yet another peaceful day on Perdiah. Everyone continued on with their usual schedules aside from Team Bushra. The two were preparing for their 1st day on the job. The silence quickly disappeared once the two started screaming at each other.

BUSHRA, WHERE DID YOU PUT MY SOCKS?!

WHERE DID YOU PUT MY TOOTHBRUSH, G?!

ANSWER ME FIRST!

NO!

The argument continued for a bit until both of them found their belongings. They had to leave the house quickly to not be late to the job. The two ran as fast as they could while using their powers to speed them up. They barely made it to the initial meeting time.

Holy crap you two. I thought you guys weren't going to make it!
What gives?

G...
* takes a breath *
G, forgot to set the timer...

(tired) You.. You told me YOU were gonna set the timer!

I would have remembered if it was the real deal, G!

Oh! So am I the liar now?!
(sarcasm) My bad!

It's all good, you two.
I should have guessed this was gonna happen.
* hands them over their work badges *
Be sure to put these on before entering the facility.
I will show you where the dining area is.

The two followed Sarpo around the facility. It was surprisingly a lot emptier than G thought.

Uhm... why is this place so empty?

Shush G, I'm enjoying the vibes of this place.
The "lone" factor really helps.

Did you say something, G?

Yea, I asked why this place was so empty.

Well you see, unlike the old MPC where we collected people we thought could help us in the war; now we are inviting the people we know and trust first.

Maybe we can expand our group later down the line but for now, we are going with this plan.

Main character syndrome, pretty much.

Woah! Where did you come from?
I don’t think I saw you passing by.

I let him in through the back entrance, Sarpo.
He mistook that door for the main entrance.

G starts giggling and Artender looks at him with an angry face.

(sarcasm) Haha, really funny.

* stops the argument *
ANYWAY, now that we are all gathered here.
Let's get into business!
Firstly, has anyone encountered any strange occurrences?

I don't think so?

Unless you count G, me neither.

* notices Artender laughing *
VERY funny Bushra.
* looks at his right *
How about you guys?

Not really.

As for me, I have only taken care of Teo and our livelihood.
Nothing much has happened to me… yet.

Oh yeah speaking of, where is he Artender?
Didn't he come with you?

Oh, he was sleeping so I didn't want to wake the little guy up.
Probably should tell him to sleep earlier from now on though...

Oh… right. Artender.
We still don't know where PotaTeo came from.
I know you are basically his father-figure but I feel like we should investigate this situation further.

Yeah, I asked a couple of people on the streets for possible theories but

none of them gave us a satisfying answer.

Hey! I'm not letting you take him away!

That's not what I'm suggesting.
All I'm saying is that we should at least find out his origins.

* thinks *
Well... that IS fair.

What did you expect me to say?

I don't know.
Usually in stuff like this there's a whole drama about taking a loved one away without their permission...

I understand.
* looks at his notes *
It says here that there are a few families waiting to be delivered to their hometowns.
Me and Cloe will help people get back to their town and you three will be tasked with taking shifts to protect the city.
Got it?

Everyone nodded. All except G who was thinking of something. He whispers to Bushra.

I don’t think we’ll be able to go fishing anytime soon…

(Sigh) Certainly seems like it.

I guess we’ll have to delay it then… sorry Bushra.

It’s all good, buddy.

G notices Sarpo looking at him and nods in response.

Well, glad we could all agree.
* punches the table *
That was it for today!
Any more questions?

ALREADY?!

I mean... yeah?
Did you guys expect this to be much longer?

Yes?! We wake up at 6 in the morning for this, for Perdiahs sake!

Hey, would you rather prefer having meetings in the middle of the night?

Hm… it IS a tempting offer… but I will pass.

Just as I thought.
* coughs *
Anyways, everyone. We are leaving now!
Don’t forget to breaks between your shifts!

The three waved at Sarpo and Ms. Meow as they went to pack their stuff.

So... who's gonna be the first to take the shift?

All 3 of them look at each other.

I think YOU should take the shift, Artender my friend.

Personally, I think G should be the first.
He loves playing hero after all.

Well...
* points at Artender *
You smell bad.

Great comeback, G.
Very ironic coming from the "forest monster".

Alright, gentlemen.
Let's solve this issue like REAL men.

Bushra shows his empty hand.

What is that suppose to mean?

I think he is talking about... rock, paper, scissors?

Yup.

You can't be serious.

Oh, but I am! Let's start!
The one who wins won't be the one to start the shift.

The three readied themselves for the battle of their lives. They waited for 5 seconds and then picked their choice. G and Bushra picked rock while Artender picked scissors.

* laughs *

Well, I guess you are the first one to take the shift, buddy.

THIS ISN'T FAIR!
I DEMAND A REMATCH!

Sucks to suck!
* jumps around with joy *
I'm getting our fishing equipment, Bushra!

Right behind ya, G!

The two start running towards their house.

Wow, talk about being lucky!

You said it!
Now that we are free for the day, let's start with finding a place to begin our trip!

(confused) Wait, I thought we were going to buy a boat?
You already had one?

Well... kinda.
Give me a second.

Bushra pulls out his phone and starts talking to someone on the

phone, presumably for the sole purpose of carrying the boat to the ocean. He finishes his call and turns back to G.

As I was saying, I did save up cash to buy myself a boat once this whole trophy thing was over and done with.
I was gonna use this boat to go back to Mercia actually.
But regardless, might as well use this bad boy for this occasion instead!

That's great to hear!
I'm assuming the person you called will bring us the boat.

Yep. Now then...
* opens his phone *
Where should we start going fishing though...
We still need to think about that.
The left side of Ocean Sara seems nice but I'm still not sure...

Can I help you out, sir?

Who the heck are you… Oh. I remember you now.
Weren't you the kid who almost blew G's brains out with a snowball?

Oh, I actually forgot about that…
* puts his hand on his chin *
I do remember you from somewhere else too though… can’t put my finger on it…

Well kid, what do you have in mind?
How can you help us out with this?

Well... I have heard from a friend of mine whom said…
* points at her left *
THAT side is much safer for fishing.

Well... thanks kid.
I guess we know what to do now, G.

Seems like it.
Thanks for helping us out... What was your name again?

Emily, sir.

Emily, thanks for your time here!

It was my pleasure.

Emily leaves the scene to do her own thing.

Time to wait for the guy I called to bring us the boat.

Alright.

They wait for half an hour... and no one even passed through the road.

In retrospect, we should have probably picked up the boat on our own.

You don't say?

They finally see a truck passing by with their boat.

WE ARE HERE!
SLOW DOWN!

The truck stops and picks them up. He drives them all the way to the left side of the ocean. And then, the driver gives them the key to the boat and leaves. Bushra waves the guy goodbye.

Thank you, guy I don't know the name of!
* smiles and looks at G *
Well G, are you ready for an adventure of a lifetime?

You bet!

And they were finally ready to go. After riding the boat straight for half an hour, they started actually fishing. Both of them readied their fishing rods and waited for something interesting to happen.

So uhh... anything interesting happening on your end, G?

Not really, no.

Hm...

The silence continued for about 10 minutes.

WAIT, I THINK I GOT ONE!

PULL IT, G!
COME ON!

OKAY! I'M TRYING!!!

G loses the fish at the last second.

Wow, G.
You suck at this.

Don't blame me!
You have WATER powers!
You could have just used them to catch the fish!

You don't get it, G, do you?
You have to do it in the "traditional" way.

What does that even mean?

Just don't use your powers, buddy.

(Sigh) Fine.

Here, let me help you out.
* grabs the fishing rod out of G's hands
First, you need to FEEL the ocean.
You got that, G?

I... guess so?

That's the gist of it.
Also, never forget to sharpen your hooks from time to time.
It's really important.

I… think I got it.
Can I try, now?

Sure buddy.
But watch me do it first, okay?

Sure.

Bushra waits for a few minutes and starts shaking in excitement.

G!!!

What?! Did you catch one?

Hold on.
Watch and learn buddy, you need to wait for the perfect moment to strike... AHA! I GOT IT!

Bushra manages to catch a swordfish and shows it to G.

Woah!

Pretty cool, right?

Yeah! What type of fish did you exactly catch though?

Oh, this one? It's the legendary...
* clears his throat *
SWORDFISH!

Sick! What are its features?

Are you trying to make me do a trivia quiz, G?
This is so unlike you.

What?! No!
* chuckles *
I was just interested!

Hah! Since when?

Don't you remember the time we watched a documentary on the TV about tuna fish?

In the cat lady's caravan?

Yep!

Huh. It must have slipped my mind then. Oh well!
Well, since you asked; swordfishes are actually pretty fast when compared to other fishes.

Huh, neato.
Also, can I try now?!

Sure, buddy.
Just don't be upset if you can't catch one on your first go.

Alright.

G waits around for a couple of minutes until...

I GOT ONE!

Alright, stay calm and try to focus.

Al-alright.

G tries to focus on the ocean and he actually manages to catch a fish.

You did it, G!

LET'S GO!!!!

That's a lanternfish in case you were curious.

Sweet!

G was going to continue celebrating until he noticed something with the fish.

(worried) Uh... are these type of fish supposed to glow red?

(confused) No? Why?

Before G could respond, the lanternfish grew in size. It was almost 5 times the size of their boat. And it did not look friendly in the slightest.

(scared) Erm... Bushra?
Should we-

G, START THE GENERATOR!

The two were fleeing away from the fish as fast as they could. G was trying to slow it down by hitting it with his hammer while Bushra was giving their boat a boost in speed with his powers. But even

with those in mind, the fish was almost catching up to them. G sees a land far away and shouts at Bushra to go change their direction there. Little did G realize;

Wait, is that-

But it was too late, they crashed into Artender's home. G was knocked out from the hit while Bushra was carrying him to the now broken shack. He was hoping the fish wouldn't follow them on land but to his surprise, the fish grew legs out of nowhere while glowing brighter than usual. Bushra was already weakened by the hit so he had to think of something quick. He was surprised to see PotaTeo rolling towards him while crying. He actually forgot that Artender left him at their shack today.

Urgh…it- it's all gonna be okay, little dude.
Please stop crying…

Before Bushra realized what was going on, the crying PotaTeo starts glowing red and grows almost the exact same size as the fish. It was such a bizarre scene, even for Bushra. He uses this opportunity to get G to safety. Before he could go to help Teo with the fish, he saw Artender shocked to see what became of his home.

BUSHRA, WHAT HAPPENED HERE?!
WHERE'S TEO?!

O-over there!

BUSHRA!
* helps him get up *
Are you alright?!

I-I guess…

What happened?!

It’s… a long story.
Short answer; go somewhere safe until me and the little guy take out the fish monster-

NO! That thing is gonna pay for what it did to my livelihood!

Artender grabs a metal pipe and goes to attack the lanternfish. To Bushra's surprise, the two managed to kill the lanternfish. PotaTeo turns back to his usual size and hugs Artender.

Huh. I guess they didn't need us after all.

Ugh... what happened?

Very long story, all I know is that Sarpo was right.
We need to solve this as soon as possible.

CHAPTER 13: CATCHING RASCALS

You gotta listen to me Sarpo!
It's not what it looks like!

Can you please stop nagging me, Artender?
We are not gonna do anything bad to him.

But he hasn't left my side for this long!
I want to see him!

Look, I know you are upset over this but we really need to do some investigations on this situation.
This could seriously be a problem in the future if we don't act fast enough.
And he needs to stay with us for the time being because of it.
Sorry but it's what must be done.

I... understand.

While we are on the topic at hand, can you call G and Bushra here?
There are stuff we need to talk about RIGHT NOW!
Is that understood?

Sigh… yes, sir.

Artender leaves Sarpo's office and tries to find Team Bushra. He finds

them hanging around the fountain outside the facility.

Are you still feeling bad, G?

G was holding an ice pack on top of his head as a result of today's events.

I guess? I'm still tired though.

Don't worry, it will all be okay.
* sees Artender *
Yo, sup Artender!
How is it going?

(tired) Hi Bushra.

Where are you guys going to stay until your shack is all fixed up?

Bushra, I don’t think you should-

It’s… fine, G.
Sarpo was generous enough to offer me a place to stay.

That’s good.

Yeah…
* looks away *
Anyways, Sarpo is calling both of you to his office.

Oh? Is it about the anomaly we experienced today?

Most likely.
But as I was saying, he says this is urgent so you two better hurry up.

Ugh, he always does this.
Doesn't he, G?

Kind of, yeah.

Well, we better go there fast or Sarpo will probably be VERY frustrated.

Yeah, let's NOT take that risk.

The two enter the facility with their work badges. They walk around the facility until they enter Sarpo's office.

Hello gentlemen. How are we handling?

I'm doing pretty okay but G hit his head pretty hard in the battle.

I understand.
Now that we are caught up, I need to ask you two a few more questions.
Firstly, what exactly happened to that fish?

Well... it started glowing red then it grew... what was it again?

Humanoid legs.

Yeah, those.

Hmm...
Let's cut to the chase, you two.
This has been going around for a long while as I suspected, but now it affects us too!

Alright, that's a fair point but why is this so important besides that?

You don't get it, do you Bushra?
* opens the curtains of the window behind him *
The people are getting more mad each passing day.
The guards can't even hold them anymore.
We need to get them to their homes as quickly as possible while

dealing with this whole mess Xtress left us with!

Ugh... that IS bad.

No kidding.
Worst of all, it isn't even the end of it!

THERE'S MORE?!

Do you guys remember the group called "The Rascals" that I mentioned a while back?

Yeah, I think I do.
What about them?

As it turns out, just as we feared, they are now stealing from innocent towns with no one else even coming close to stopping their reign.

(worried) Surely, there were survivors… right?

…not that I can recall, at least.
The worst part is that they are still continuing to steal from other

towns before we can warn them about these criminals!

So, what is our plan here?

We recently noticed a pattern between the attacks and we are suspecting they are going to attack there soon.

Which is?

It's a small town in the middle of a desert called Town Downer.

We managed to contact the mayor of said town that you two were coming to help them.

Oh.

So yeah, please get to it you two.

Is there anything else we need to know about these people?

No, this is all the information we have.

Alright, thanks Sarpo!
We will be sure to get rid of those bozos in no time!

Thank you so much, you two...

The two leave the office and go outside the building.

Wait, who's going to take us there?

They hear the sounds of a car approaching them.

You were saying?

Wow! Perfect timing, buddy!

* chuckles *
You know me!

Glad you are doing better since the last time we talked, dude!

You mean 15 minutes ago?

Yep!
Is Teo coming with us too?

…

* whispers *
Maybe this isn't the best time to ask about this, G.

...oh, right.
Sorry Artender.

Artender just looked at G blankly as he started to drive. They drove around for 2 hours until they arrived at Town Downer. It looked like a pretty calm place… at least, at the moment.

Alright you two, Sarpo wanted me to drop you guys at the entrance of the town.

Are you not coming with us?

Unfortunately, no.
Sarpo told me he needed me for another job.

I hope you reach MPC 2 safely, my friend.

Ditto.

...thanks you two, see you later.

The two wave at him and start walking towards the town.

* tries to cool himself down *
Oh man… this place sure is hot.

Sure is.
Do you have anything to drink?

Nope.

Darn it.
* notices the townsfolk running towards them *
Welp, guess we gotta go introduce ourselves now.

The two enter the town and the townsfolk cheer for both of them. G was embarrassed of the attention while Bushra was having the time of his life.

* chuckles *
Slow down, folks!
I appreciate the attention but can you folks tell us where we can find your mayor?
We need to talk to him about our mission.

Were you looking for this guy?

The two go into their battle stances while everyone froze in place. G was hoping their job would be simple and quick but as it turns out, it was only just getting started.

Are you guys "The Rascals" that everyone has been babbling about?!

Indeed.
In fact, it's an honor to learn that we are so widely known.

Before you do anything drastic, leave this place immediately!
You will regret it!

Aw, how cute.
* changes the tone of her voice *
Listen up laddie!
Maybe YA should be worried about what's about to happen to ya and your amigo over there!

Don't talk to him like that!
Only I, Bushra Stoked, can talk to him that way!

(His surname is Stoked?!)

(worried) Perhaps... They are right, boss.

Shut up, Murray.

Okay, boss…

I'm pleased to finally have met with you two.
Your legend is known everywhere on Perdiah.

The caricatures who took down our "old boss"
* spits at the ground and reaches out to her bag *
HAH!

Settle down, Joyce.
* reaches out his hand *
As she was saying, you two DID take down our old boss and we could not thank you enough for it.

* shakes his hand *
Uhm… thanks?

We did not think she was using us like that.

You are welcome?

As a matter of fact…

The figure pushed G back and pulls out his bow and shoots an arrow towards him. G blocks it but he knew this was just the start of it.

-she was just holding us back.

EVERYONE, GET DOWN!

The townsfolk including the mayor escape and G jumps at Markus with his hammer. But Markus dodges his attack. Before he could strike again, Joyce throws a potion at him.

UGH!

* blocks an arrow that came from Markus and runs towards G *
Are you okay, G?

I CAN'T SEE!

(This is bad, this bad. What do I even do!?)
* realizes something *
Oh yeah.

Bushra walks towards the Rascals with a huge grin on his face.

* pulls out his fishing rod *
FETCH!

As he threw his fishing rod, Joyce and Murray went to follow it while Markus was left confused. He kept screaming for them to come back. Bushra took this opportunity to search for wet wipes. After finding one just beneath a house, he helps G clean his eyes.

Can you see better now?

* blinks constantly to check *
Yeah, I'm better now. Thanks!
* points at the Rascals *
I'm surprised that trick still works.

Don't mention it G but we need to find a way to get rid of these guys first.
They are surprisingly tougher than I was expecting, especially that cowboy lady.

Yeah, 2 on 3 isn't really ideal either.
* sits down *
So what is the game plan here?
Can't you just use your water powers to distract them?

Bushra points around them in disappointment.

(embarrassed) Oh, right.

* changes the topic *
So what are we gonna do then? Any ideas?

Hm... maybe you can take the potion lady while I take the mechanic.
After that we can probably take down the one eyed freak.

That isn't a bad plan actually.
(sarcasm) When did you become a planning master?

I appreciate the joke G but it's not the best time to talk about this right now.
We need to take down these Hood wannabees first!

R- right!

They split up while still distracting Markus. G dodges the potions that Joyce was throwing at him. He looks at Bushra to see him also fighting Murray. The plan was working as intended.

Sup laddie! Show me what ya got!

I'm not falling for that trick, whatever your name is!

Oh ah didn't expect a dummy like ya to actually predict that.
Guess ah didn't expect ya to ACTUALLY have the capacity to

think.

TAKE THAT BACK!

* dodges his attack *
Ah would take it back but ya ain't worth my time, sugah.

GRR... THAT'S IT!

As G jumps at her, Joyce smirks devilishly.

MURRAY!
YA IDIOT! INITIATE PLAN B!

O- okay!

What the-

As Murray pushes a button on his remote controller, Joyce's boots turn into metal boots and she flies away from G's attack. Joyce lends Murray some of her potions while flying. The two then bombard Team Bushra with potions until they were fully covered with smoke.

Very well, you two. Good job.

Aw… thanks boss-man!

Uh… yay?

No matter now.
Let's take what we want and turn this miserable town into an ugly blemish.

The Rascals ran towards the houses to get what they wanted while Murray stayed outside to plant the bombs. While they were busy stealing, they didn't notice Team Bushra sitting on top of a house.

(Huff puff) Are you okay, Bushra?

(confused) How did you-

I used my hammer to launch us into the air without them seeing us take airborne.

Since when could you do that?

I trained by myself too, you know?

Fair.

Well uhh speaking of which... the plan didn't work.

(sarcasm) Jeez, how could you tell?
Do you have any suggestions, smart guy?

Should we call for backup?

We can’t.

Why?

They destroyed the network connections, G.
They thought of all of this ahead of time... it's almost terrifying.

Hm... maybe we can take them out one by one?

I doubt it but we need to act quickly so we will go with your plan for the time being.
Come on!

Bushra goes to distract Joyce and Markus while G ran next to the

oblivious Murray just continuing to plant the bombs without a care in the world.

Where did you come from, you pest?!

(sarcasm) Aww, glad you missed me too!

* prepares her potions *
Ya are gonna wish ah stayed dead, ya lil' fish fella!

(worried) Oh boy.
(I hope G is doing better than me right now…)

Meanwhile;

* hears sounds of running *
Wait, who is that-

G knocks him out with a single swing of his hammer. He wanted to do the final blow until he... just didn't have the courage to do it. It didn't feel right taking the life of someone unconscious. G never killed anyone outside of hoodsters before and even then, all hoodsters he defeated poof-ed out of existence. But now... he was conflicted. Sarpo explained that all the hoodsters that survived Xtress' reign were turned back to regular humans. G knew what had to be done but he was still second guessing in his head.

G, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

HURRY UP!

* shakes his head *
O-okay!

He prepares his hammer but realizes that Murray escaped. He looks around to find Murray building a small drone.

Get back here!

Fat chance, green guy!

Murray uses the potion Joyce gave him to blind G once again.

NOT AGAIN!

I... I did it!

Murray, ya son of a gun! Ya did it again!
Boss-man, we need to flee now!

I'm coming, Joyce!
I will catch up with you two, you go ahead!

* smiles *
Works for me!

Murray starts the drone and it starts carrying him and Joyce. Markus first looks at the empty town and then looks at Bushra trying to help G.

Welp, it has been fun boys!
See you never!

He grabs Joyce's hand and the three fly away from the town with all the stuff they wanted.

Wait... why did they leave?

The- They planted a bomb somewhere.
I know where it is but I can't see anything!

Hold on, G.
Explain to me what it looked like and maybe I can find it!

Alright. So, there was this huge rock.

And?

Then he went behind it and stayed there for a while.
That's where I'm guessing he planted it.

Gotcha!
I will be back once I disarm this bomb.

He looks around the town until he sees the rock G was talking about. He went behind it to see the bomb with a digital countdown. He opens the bomb and comes across two different colored wires.

You gotta be kidding me.

* still trying to find out where he was going *
What's wrong dude?

I found the bomb but there are two wires.
* starts to sweat in fear *
I have seen enough action movies to know that this won't end well!

I would say take your time but we are all now standing on top of a hazardous area!
Are you gonna risk it all for this?

* sweats even more *
I'm... I'm trying to think of something else, okay?!

Bushra's sweat suddenly drops on top of the circuits and short

circuits the whole bomb, causing it to deactivate.

(takes a heavy breath) Oh, thank Perdiah.

Did you disarm the bomb?!

Yes, G... I did.

Bushra falls down to the ground shortly after.

The two then spent the rest of their time on Town Downer to fix the damage caused by the Rascals. The townsfolk returned and helped them too. Both of them were extremely tired, even more so than yesterday. They waited for Artender to come back because of their lack of communication.

Sup you two.
* looks around *
I'm assuming it went well?

* fake laughs *
No actually, not in the slightest.

Yeah... I kinda just want to go back home please.

Meh, your choice.

They hopped into Artender’s car and started their way back home.

So... how was your day Artender?

It was okay.
Sarpo gave me a job that required me to assign every person to their respectivetowns and that was EXHAUSTING!

Oh my, that sounds awful.

It was.
And the worst part is that they still won't let me see Teo!
I can't even begin to imagine what they are doing to him...

I’m sorry Artender, I-

And I couldn't even work on fixing my home!
Plus, Sarpo is so secretive for some reason!
What even happened to him in these past couple of days?!

You are aware that the fate of the people still residing in the city rests on his shoulders, right?

I mean yeah, but-

Even if I don't agree with his takes sometimes, I have to respect him for even handling this.

…yeah, fair enough.

Artender stops talking and just focuses on the road. After they drove for another 2 hours, they reached the city. The two of them tell Artender a good night and go back to their house. They change their clothes and get inside their beds.

* tries to cheer up Bushra *
Whew, what a day, huh?

Bushra doesn't respond. G looks down at Bushra from the top bunk of their bunk bed.

Uhh... are you okay dude?

…

Come on man, we talked about this just a few days ago!
No more hiding thoughts from each other!

I'm worried, G.

Uhh…why?

Gosh darn it, G!
Don't you see it?!

G shakes his head.

We got out of there by sheer luck, G!
Those wannabees took us out like we were just newbies!

Hey, you couldn't use your water powers against them!
Plus they were heavily organized.
Think of it that way!

I tried to, G...
But what if… we didn’t make it out alive.
Have you ever thought of that?!

I guess I never thought of it like that.
Or even wanted to think about that possibility.

Our luck might run out one day and I'm... scared because of it.

…

You get it now G?!

I actually do.
But there's one thing you didn't consider, Bushra.

And that is?

We are a team, Bushra.
We stick together no matter what.

Heh. You and your optimism never ceases to amaze me.

Thanks dude.

* yawns *
Was a nice talk but we really need to sleep for tomorrow's appointment.

Good point.
* turns off the lights from above *
Good night Bushra!

Good night G.

Meanwhile inside MPC 2 headquarters;

I got all the files you needed, Sarpo.
* looks over to him *
Need anything else?

(very tired) Uhh.. no.
T-Thank you Cloe.
I really appreciate you helping me out with this.

It’s my pleasure, Sarpo.
It’s the least I could do.

Heh...
Oh yeah, one thing though.

Yes?

Can you check up on **her** before we close the facility down for the day?

Sure!
Good night Sarpo!

She looks back since Sarpo didn't respond but sees him sleeping with his head slumped over the table. She didn't want to wake him

up after today. Then she decides to bring him a blanket so he wouldn't get a cold while sleeping. She turns off the light inside his office and goes to the secret room that required a password. She types in "2MZ4" and enters the room.

Alright Hood, we need to talk.

CHAPTER 14: A HOODED ISSUE

It was a peaceful night on Perdiah. Team Bushra were sleeping well after that stressful day. The MPC 2's owner, Sarpo, accidentally fell asleep in his office. Artender on the other hand, couldn't sleep. He was still thinking about his poor son, PotaTeo. But aside from this, there were 2 parties that were still awake...

WOO!!! That was KILLER!
Let's do it again!

Can we not do that actually-

Shut up, you two.
There’s our stop.

They jump out of the drone and Murray presses the "self-destruct" button.

Why did ya create a button like that, IDIOT?!

Sorry, Joyce...
I just wanted to cover our tracks...

Markus doesn’t pay the two any sort of attention.

Alright you two.

* pulls out a map *
Since those bozos learned of our plan, we need to change our direction.

So no more bombing lousy towns???
LAME!

Calm down, Joyce.
We can still do... whatever you just said.

Nevermind, ah’m still in!

Hm... I wonder if we can convince any of the other surviving hoodsters to join us...

Out of the question Murray.
Remember, if they don’t cooperate, don't show them mercy.

I... understand boss.

Good.
* takes a sip out of his water bottle *
Now then, let's go rob some more buckos!

Meanwhile inside MPC 2 headquarters, Ms. Meow was surprised to find Hood just casually watching TV from her cell.

Come on Jack!
Just confess to her already!

Uhh... Hood?

NOOO!
Why did their boss kill her love interest!
Gosh dang it, Jack!

* coughs *

Oh, sorry pumpkin. I didn't notice you.
* closes her TV *
What do you want from poor ol' me?

Firstly... new ’do for the occasion?

Oh yes, pumpkin.
Glad you noticed my new looks.

I think it looks good on you.

Thank you.

Second off…
What were you even watching?
You seemed pretty into it.

Oh!
It's called Mandy & Friends!
It's about a girl and her extensive love life-

No, no. Thanks for explaining but I'm just-
* looks around the cell *
surprised you didn't try to escape.

Oh please! Why would I want to escape, pumpkin?
* chuckles *
I can hear what you guys are dealing with even from here.

Haha, very funny, Hood.
You are not in the best position to pick a fight with me.

(sarcasm) Oooh, I'm SOOO scared!
Fine, I'm listenin'.
What do you got for me?

Since you have been listening to our conversations for a while, I don't think I need to introduce you to the surviving hoodster group.

* grins *
Nah, I lied about that.

Excuse you?

I just pretended to know so you would feel intimidated.

(confused) Why are you telling me this?

Just felt like it.

You are a strange lady.

You can say that again!
* stands up *
So tell me pumpkin, what ACTUALLY brings you here?

Alright so... There has been a surviving hoodster group that has been terrorizing every town they come across.
We sent Bushra and G to their latest known location and even they couldn't take them out.

Wait, what?

How did those two lose?
Wait a second… do you know the hoodsters' assigned numbers?

Uh, no?
Don't you know their names or something?

No?!
Do you think I have time to memorize the names of thousands of people?!

Can you at least remember what they looked like?

Sort of but I cannot guarantee it, pumpkin.

We'll have to do…
So, the reports say that the group consists of a mad scientist, a mechanic and a mercenary.

Those are not really extensive descriptions, pumpkin.

* sighs *
Figured as much.
In that case, can you help us stop Xtress at least?

(shocked) Master is still out there?

* tries to act natural *
I mean, didn't we already get rid of him?

We thought we did but for some reason, his powers keep affecting Perdiah!

Oh, so that's what the fuss is all about.

* stands up *
Can you PLEASE stop being so cryptic, Hood?!

* smiles *
Calm down, pumpkin.
I'm just saying that I saw these on TV once.
I didn't understand what they were talking about at the time so I went on with my day without giving a damn.

Hm…

I know you still don't trust me, pumpkin.
Heck, I wouldn’t either.
So, just get to the point.

…sure.
As I was saying, do you have anything we can use to stop Xtress' attacks?

Hm... During my research about him, I came across red rings...

* starts writing on her notebook *
Go on…

After trying to find another one of those rings, I realized how rare they were to find.
They were exceptionally rare as a matter of fact.

How many did you have again?

I think I only had four.

Alright.
But how can the rings help us with this?

You don't get the full picture, pumpkin.
I sacrificed thousands of people and one of those rings to open just ONE portal.
We need to stop Xtress' reign by going where he is located!

Cloe shivers in fear.

You don’t mean-

* chuckles *
Oh yes I do, pumpkin.
We need to go to the Nor Plane.

But-

Oh! And another thing!
* smiles *
Since I'm assuming you DON'T want to sacrifice thousands of people just to open one portal, I think *those two* using the rings could do the trick instead!

This- this is a lot to take all at once, Hood.
* gets up from her chair *
Regardless of how much I despise you as a person… thanks for your time.

My pleasure, pumpkin.
Rest well...

Cloe tries to not make any eye contact with Hood as she walks towards the door.

Yeah… you too.

The very next day, inside Team Bushra's home;

(yawn) Ugh What time is it?
* checks the clock on the wall *
7 AM?!

G gets up from his bed in panic and shakes Bushra to wake him up.

(sleepy) 5 more minutes G...

WE ARE LATE BUSHRA!
COME ON!

Ugh…
* clears his eyes *
G, what are you waffling about?

For Perdiah's sake, WAKE UP!

* finally gets up *
Wait, did you just say it was 7 AM?!

Yeah man!
Sarpo is going to kill us if we don't go now!

(yawn) Right…

The two ran towards MPC 2 but unlike the usual, something weird was going on. There were hundreds of people standing in front of the headquarters, screaming and shouting at the people inside it. They saw Ms. Meow on the balcony trying to calm them down but it clearly wasn't working. Suddenly the ground next to them started making noise and then a friendly face showed up under it.

(whispers) Psst, this way you two!

Sarpo, what are you doing in there?!

Getting you two out of harms way, G.
Follow me inside the headquarters.

The two follow Sarpo inside the underground bunker. The bunker lead to a horizontal tunnel. They go ahead while Sarpo locked the opening in case anyone found out they were there.

Since when did you guys build this place?

Oh, right.
It was a pet project of mine I built a while back.
I just wanted fast travel between MPC 2 members and sure enough, it worked out in our favor!

You bet!

They get out of the bunker and enter MPC 2.

Say, what's going on outside?
Why are people trying to get inside?

(sigh) Remember when I told you two that people were getting tired of us constantly delaying their way back home?

Yeah?

They are now on their breaking point.

Well that sucks.

Sure does.
* sits down *
Cloe tried to talk with them but it didn't work.

Maybe they would want you to speak up instead of her, Sarpo?

I think that would make them angrier more than anything-

Actually Bushra has a point.

He does?!

Heck yeah!

It's the best option I can think of right now...

Sarpo goes to the balcony to do a speech in front of hundreds of people. But the crowd was too loud, it was hard to make out who was saying what.

"When are we gonna go home?!"
"Open the doors, you cowards!"
"Give it up, Joe! This is MINE!"
"I know this movie! The Despicable-“
"Has anyone seen my son?!"

* grabs the microphone *
Hello ladies and gentlemen!
I'm Sarpo, the owner of MPC 2!
I would just like to ask you to please calm down for a hot minute.
As I was saying...

While he is doing that, I need to tell you two something.

EEEK!
H- hi, Ms. Meow!

Hi to you as well, G.
* points inside *
Let's go to the canteen. I'm assuming you two didn't have breakfast before coming here?

Yep.

Unfortunately.

Then let’s start feasting, you two!

She leads the two into the canteen area where there were only a few seats and no other person in sight.

Are you sure this is the right place?

Yes.

Okay then.

Team Bushra sat down while Ms. Meow started making eggs with sauce for breakfast.

Erm... Ms. Meow?

Yes, G?

I have always wondered, what happened to your circus business and gang after the battle ended?

(sigh) Well, they went back to the forest.
We never managed to find the Travelers that ran away like cowards.

She seemed visibly frustrated but quickly changes the topic.

As for the circus business, I was going to start it up again but then...
(sarcasm) Xtress and his never ending shenanigans started once again.

Huh.

Yeah…
* looks at the frying pan *
Well, would you look at that.
The food is ready!

HOORAY!

The two start eating. G never realized how hungry he was before that point. While Bushra wasn't enjoying the food as much as G, he was somehow eating it faster than G.

Glad you two liked it!

* still munching on food *
This is amazing, Ms. Meow!
You are so good at this!

Don't mention it.

Say…
* takes a bite of his bread *
What did you want to say earlier?

Oh, right.
About that... I talked to Hood last night about what we could do to stop Xtress' for good.

Well... what did she say?

She told me that we needed to go to Nor Plane to get rid of Xtress for good.

Hm... and what did Miss Perfect say about how to go there?

That's the strange part.
She told me that the red ring she had, amplified with you guys' powers, might reopen the portal.

You know that she could be lying about this, right?

Yeah, I am not %100 on board with her plan either.
I don't know if we should trust her on this.
What if those rings drain your powers instead and she betrays us the second they activate?!

Ugh... tough call.
Do we have any alternative solutions besides stalling for time?

Regardless of how well Sarpo handles the situation outside, I'm not sure he will keep the people calm for long.

Ms. Meow then sees Sarpo entering the canteen all tired with Artender alongside him.

Did it go well?

Sarpo shook his head in disappointment.

(sigh) I guess we have no other choice besides going with Hood’s plan.

Hood's what?
What are you talking about?

I will explain it later, Sarpo.
Firstly, what happened to the crowd? Are they still outside?

The city guards are thankfully taking care of them for the time being.
But... they didn't listen to me...
I thought I could change their minds but...

Tsch, tsch….

Cloe shuts him up and gives him a cup of coffee.

Don't worry about that for now, Sarpo.
Please sit down and relax while I talk to Artender about... you know.

* smiles *
That would do me wonders, thank you.

Meanwhile on the other side of the room;

Heya Artender!
How are you?

Good, I guess…

That's good to hear, buddy.

Still really worried about Teo though...

Speaking of him... can you come with me for a second, Artender?

(excited) O- of course Ms Meow.

Come with me.
I need to tell you something.

Artender follows Ms. Meow into an operating room.

Is this about Teo?

Indeed.

Nothing bad happened to him, right?!

Don't worry, he is fine.
We just did some tests on him and just as we suspected, he has the same power source as G and Bushra.

W- what does that mean?

He is an Xtress creation. So, in other words… Xtress is PotaTeo's father.

Artender was left distraught afterwards. He always thought PotaTeo’s sudden appearance was weird but he did not care. He finally had someone he looked after but now... he wasn't even sure about anything.

I... can I see him at the very least?

Of course.
His operations are done anyway.

I can call him here if you want.

Yes, please.

PotaTeo enters the room after a few minutes passed and hopped onto Artender's arms. PotaTeo hugged him and Artender hugged him back.

I missed you too, little guy...

I'm glad you two reunited.
As for the big issue at hand... Come with me, you two.
We need to talk with someone.

They exited the operating room and called the rest of the MPC2 members.

We are coming Cloe!
You go on ahead!

She did as Sarpo said. Hood was still watching TV on her cell and was shocked to see nearly everyone enter the room.

(surprised) Hello pumpkins.
Certainly didn't expect all of you to come here.

* grins *
Sup Hood.

How is prison life going for you? Is it fun?

Shut it, fisher boy.

Hi Hood.
Not so pleasant to see you again.

Likewise, G.

Alright, are we done with the reunions now?

Yes, that should be enough.

They all walk up to her cell. They open her cell and then put handcuffs on her hands.

(sarcasm) Talk about a warm welcome...

Cloe opens her paws to reveal the 3 rings Hood was talking about.

Alright Hood.
We got what you wanted.
Now tell us how we can open your portal.

By your command, pumpkin.

* clears her throat *
Now, you two need to wear these rings.

Three actually.

Everyone looked at him all confused.

What are you talking about, pumpkin?

...Teo has a part of Xtress' powers too.

Huh... fascinating.
In that case, he should wear one too.

Since PotaTeo didn't have hands, Artender put the ring on his arm.

Excellent, pumpkin.
I should also note that without soul sacrifices, the portal can only hold 3 people at a time.
You three will need to use your rings to come back home once you deal with him.

* wears the ring *
I guess that's self explanatory.

* also wears the ring *
I guess so.

Now.
I want all three of you to think about your biggest desires.

What will that even accomplish?

You will understand soon, Sarpo.

The three do as she says and all of their eyes turn red for a single second. After that, the room starts shaking and a portal appears in the middle of the room. Everyone was amazed by it. PotaTeo jumps into Bushra's arms with confidence in his eyes.

* looks at G and PotaTeo *
Boys, let's get this over wi-

Before he could continue his sentence, Hood pushes him aside and goes inside the portal while laughing. Bushra in pure anger follows her inside while he was holding PotaTeo on his arms.

BUSHRA, WAIT-

After the three passed through, the room exploded. The city guards went inside the building after the explosion and found all of them laying on the ground. They quickly carried them to the hospital. The guards did not know what caused the explosion but they knew they were going to get some answers from the group once they were fully healed.

CHAPTER 15: TOASTER TURTLE

It was a terrible day on Perdiah. One of MPC 2's biggest enemies has escaped alongside two of their comrades. After the explosion, Artender woke up in pain. He looked around to see that he was lying on a bed inside a hospital. He remembered this place, he helped build it a few months ago. It was called "Hospital Hopper " He didn't think he would be here anytime soon but low and behold, there he was. Left with guilt over losing PotaTeo once again, he stands up to check up on his friends.

Uhh... Sarpo? Ms. Meow? G?
Is anyone there?

He doesn't hear anything and continues looking for his friends. He sees Ms. Meow and Sarpo lying in there, still sleeping. He didn't want to wake them up so he continued looking for others. Then he sees a bed fully open with a toaster on top of it. He grabs the toaster and looks at it in confusion.

* looks around *
Uhh, who brought this here?
And why is it here in the first place?

Artender was sick of no one answering him so he went back to his bed and waited for the doctors to finally give him some answers.

Meanwhile in a town on the other side of Perdiah; folks of Town Unda were trying to rebuild their own town. They were in the middle of cleaning the mushrooms off their town. The people could overhear a lady shouting at her peers for support.

Hey! Guys, we need to get rid of these mushrooms first!

Of course, Clara!

Thank you Jack.
* looks at the nasty mushrooms *
Gosh, I'm so tired of this!

We all are Clara but we all have to clean up our town!

I know Terry but...gosh.
I wish we could just start rebuilding already!

Umm... someone is approaching the town, boss.

Ugh, who is it?

I think might want to see it with your own eyes.

Yeah whatever, Lydia.
* points at Terry *

Terry! You are in charge until I'm back.

Got it, boss!

But what about me…

You can help by… carrying the armory or something.

YAY!

(Whatever...)

Clara goes to check up on who entered their town only to find someone who she thought would never see again around these parts again. There was a hoodster holding a peace flag at the entrance of the town.

A HOODSTER?!

Clara takes out her sword and rushes towards the hoodster. The hoodster dodges her attack and tries to talk to her.

Can we please stop with this already?
* raises the flag way higher *
I have come to make peace.

Why should we listen to you after your comrades did to Perdiah?!

I cannot deny what they did nor want to justify their actions.
* bows down *
I just want to talk. Please.

(sigh) Make it quick.

My name is... Lawrence, I was once a lovely hoodster whom did what he was told.

* points her sword closer to the hoodster's face *
We already know that, dirt bag.
Tell me something I don't know.

I would like to turn over a new leaf after our boss Hood was overthrown by amateurs.

Give me a reason why I should trust you.

I... I had to go somewhere after our leader was taken prisoner by them.
I couldn't have surrendered, they would have killed me on sight.
* stands up *
So please, spare me. I really want to help your cause.

* looks at the hoodster dead in the eye *
Fine. But I'll be keeping my eyes... well, eye on you at all times!

Thank you so much, Ms...?

Clara.
Clara Spades.

Clara, I am honored to be on your side starting from now!

(unimpressed) Sure.

They let the hoodster inside their town. Even though Clara was still suspicious of the hoodster that just appeared in their land, he wasn't all that bad. No one in the town complained about him, in fact they all cheered for him. Clara wanted to check out what was up with this new "hero" of the town.

How is it going... What was it again?

The name’s Lawrence, Ms. Spades.

Oh right.
* leans back on a wall *

So… what's up, Lawrence?
Getting used to the place?

Pretty good actually!
* catches a brick that was falling *
Be careful you guys!

Sorry, Lawrence!

It’s all good, Jack!
Be sure to be more careful next time

* nervously chuckles *
I will… hopefully!

* looks back at Clara *
But yeah, about the whole staying thing…
Everyone’s so nice in here! I feel like I’m at home already!

Uh huh…

Anyways…
*points at a wrench *
Can you hand that over? I need to fix this pipe.

Oh, sure.
I will check up on the folks before calling it quits for the day, if you don't mind.

No problem whatsoever!

Alright then!

She goes to check up on all of her townsfolk. Even though she didn't entirely trust Lawrence yet, she still wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt for today… Suddenly;

CLARA, CLARA!

Ugh, what is it, you two?

Did the hoodster do anything bad to you?!

Not at all.

Are you sure he’s good news?

I mean I don’t trust him yet but he doesn’t seem too bad…

If you say so…

Yeah, just let us know if he tries anything funny!

*not paying attention *
Sure, sure… see you guys whenever.

They all went to sleep shortly after. When they woke up according to their schedule, Clara went to check on Lawrence to see what he was up to. He was still sleeping as she was expecting. His snoring was really loud too for some reason.

* shouts at him from his window *
WAKE UP LAWRENCE!

What...
* looks at the clock *
Oh shoot! Sorry for this, Clara.

It's all good, Lawrence.
You are new around here after all.

Man, I haven't slept this good in a while.
* holds her hand *
Thank you!

* blushes *
Y- you are welcome?

Lawrence finally wakes up and starts dressing up. While waiting for Lawrence, Clara could hear him coughing. What's strange about it was the fact that she could hear the pitch of his voice becoming higher and then turning back to normal for just a second. She was still unsure of the hoodster's intentions but she continued to watch over him.

Alright, I’m ready.

* snaps herself out of it *
M- me too. Well, let’s get to work.
These mushrooms aren’t going to clean themselves up!

They continued getting rid of the mushrooms from the town for a whole week. During one of their working days however;

(huff puff) I'm tired...
* looks up *
How are things going there, Lawrence?

As usual, you?

I’m a bit tired but I’ll be fine!
Thanks for asking!
Now if you will excuse me, I need to borrow that ring-

She accidentally trips on a wrench that she placed on the plank and starts falling down.

Lawrence saves her before she could fall further.

You… saved me?

Sure did.
* pulls her towards him *
Almost got it... DONE.

She was safe once more. The two smiled at each other and continued their work sessions. Every passing day, they were getting more and more tired. Clara and Lawrence became the new leaders of the townsfolk, essentially the new mayors of said town. Now the two were relaxing in the forest. Lawrence was bored of doing nothing so he started asking Clara questions.

So... Do we have anything else to do for the town?

No. In fact, we are actually done with cleaning up the mushrooms.
So, we can relax for a change!

Hm…

Is something wrong, Lawrence?

Not really.
I have just been thinking...
What if we turned this town into a full blown city?

WHAT?!
Where did you get the idea?!

I just thought it would be cool.
Don't you think so?

Nuh UH! Absolutely not!
We didn’t even let MPC2 know of this-

Perhaps we can ask our friends what they think of my plan instead?

B- but-

Before she could stop him, he was already asking people what they thought of his idea.

"That would be cool!"

"What does Clara think of this?"

"I wouldn't mind it."

"Will there be free taco tuesdays?"

Well, most people I asked said they wanted it, soo...

(sigh) Fine.
But you should let MPC2 know of this as soon as possible!

About that… There has been an explosion inside MPC 2 headquarters that tore MPC 2 down.

What?!

Yeah, didn't you hear?
What an awful timing, isn't it?
I think a situation like this calls for drastic measures… such as this one.

…yeah, you are right.
But the second they are back on their feet, we gotta let them know!

Of course…

Before you go, Lawrence…

What is it?

I have always wanted to ask you something.
Sorry if this is very random but...why don't you take off the hood?
Doesn't that remind you of your supposed "dark past"?

I just don't want people to judge me for who I once was

* stands up *

I want to send a message to these people!

To show that even hoodsters can change!

Now that you put it that way...
* puts her hand on his shoulder *
In that case, my hoodster friend.
Let's start building this city of yours!

After a day passed, they started building their new city. Everyone was hard at work once more. But this time, it was far more difficult. Lawrence tried to force upon a deadline that was refused by Clara and most of the other townsfolk. Some townsfolk were already regretting their decision but it was too late now. It took them another week to expand the town, turning it into a full on city. They even built walls around the city to keep themselves safe from outside enemies. The two town leaders were tired once more. But they were thankfully done with everything now.

You know what, Lawrence?
I have to give credit where it's due.
This wasn't such a bad idea after all!

* chuckles *
Now you get it!
* lifts his soda can up in the air *
Cheers?

Cheers.

Hm…

Lawrence? You thinking about something?
Is it… about your past?

Kind of, yeah.

Well, you have no reason to fear!
It's all in the past, you are a whole different person now!

* smirks *
Thanks, Clara...

The two go to sleep after that long day in the newly built, Mayor House. Clara was finally happy that everything she worked for has paid off in the end. She felt like she had a friend she could trust now. The next day however, something strange happened. She heard knocking on the door. Both she and Lawrence woke up to open the door.

How can we help you, ma’am?

(still crying) My.. My husband has been kidnapped!

Oh my goodness, what exactly happened?!

We all went to bed at the exact same hour and after waking up, I couldn't find any trace of... their father!

Can... Can you please help us?

Sure can!

Mm... I guess we can do it.

Thank you so much!

The two begin their research inside the city with their own car. Clara sits on the driver's seat.

That's... very odd.
Never thought something like this would happen when we are protected by these walls.

It might be someone inside the city, perhaps!

That makes sense.
Thanks Lawrence!

My pleasure.

They go to investigate the person's house and find the region's guards already doing investigations in the area. They still decide to look for clues, realize they aren't fit for the job and ask the guards what they found.

ARGH!
You two scared me!

Thanks for your comment sir but we came here for an important cause.
* shows him a picture of the missing father *
Have you found any evidence regarding Mr. Cart's disappearance?

Sadly no.
We tried to look at all the security cameras in the city but we could not find a single camera showing where Mr. Cart went to.

Hmm... thank you officer.
Have a great day.

The two go outside and talk.

(curious) Why didn't you say anything over there?

(upset) I would rather not talk to the guards with... these clothes.

Yeah, I understand.

The two then go home without any lead. Just as Clara thought things were getting better, it became worse and worse each passing day. More people were disappearing without no one knowing where they went. It was horrible. Clara could not sleep for days because of it. She had to find who was behind this. She had someone in mind that could have pulled a stunt like this... but she didn't want to think about it. Lawrence saved her once, she didn't think he had ill intentions after all he did to their once mushroom filled town. But... she wanted to check just in case.

One night; while they were preparing to go to a circus in the nearby street…

Gosh I am so excited for today's rollercoaster ride!
* looks at her *
Are you excited as well, Clara?

Yeah.
...Hey Lawrence.

Yes?

What if you go first to get us our tickets?
I want to call some family friends for the time being if that's okay with you.

Sure is!
* grabs his stuff *
See you there, sis!

Lawrence then went outside their house to get them those tickets. Clara looked around in shame but she knew what she had to do. She starts looking around Lawrence's stuff, most of it was just nothing special. Although, she noticed something under his bed. She pushed the bed towards herself and saw an entrance to a ... bunker? She went inside the supposed bunker and climbed down some stairs to boot. After touching the ground, she was trying to figure out just what she was seeing. She saw a big machine inside a work room filled with blue prints for something. She logically thought these blueprints were for operating this big machine. She looked on her left to see a few more rooms. Before she could see what was inside them, her worst nightmare came true.

* holding their tickets *
What… are you doing here, Clara?

(angry) Me?! What were YOU doing here?!

(disappointed) I knew I should have gotten rid of you a long time ago.

What are you talking about?!
* pulls out her sword *
Don't make me hurt you after all we did together!

Cute.

Lawrence(?), drops the tickets and goes into his battle stance.

This should be fun.

Clara was fighting for her life and Lawrence was dodging all of her attacks, also punching her in the face constantly. She noticed how experienced he was in combat and tried a more direct approach. She drops her sword and uses her fists to fight instead. Lawrence wasn't expecting this approach however. Because of this, it left him wide open for an upcoming attack to the throat. Lawrence starts coughing and the same thing Clara saw a few weeks ago happened again. His voice turned robotic first and then the pitch of his voice became higher. Clara pointed her sword at the figure whom she thought she knew.

Who- who are you?!

Lawrence(?) started talking in a higher pitched voice.

Well then.

I guess I can ditch this disguise now.

Lawrence(?) took off his hoodster office only to reveal...

YOU ARE A GIRL?!

Oh, shut up.
You cannot imagine how annoying wearing that thing 24/7 was.

S-stay away from me!
* starts retreating *
Who even are you?!

The future queen of Perdiah, Maizie Thorn!
* looks at the machine with a smile *
And I'm NOT letting you ruin all my plans after all of this.

Clara tries reaching to her sword before Maizie pushes it away from her.

(scared) Why are you doing this?!
I thought we were friends!

* smirks *
Don't worry Clara, I will still be your friend…

Maizie points at the giant machine in the room.

With this machine, you will ALWAYS be my friend!

What if…

Clara uses this chance to stand up, grab her sword and point it at Maizie.

What if I said "no", you traitor?!

I’m afraid that won’t be necessary, Ms. Spades.

Maizie snaps her fingers and two people appear from the previously locked away doors in the bunker. Clara tries to run away but the two hold her in place. Clara started to freak out when she realized who these people were. They looked different however. Their eye colors were crystal blue and they had crystals sticking out of their heads. Clara was horrified.

Mr. Cart?!

Jack?!

I call them my **Crystal Knights**!

* points at the machine *

With this, you too can become one of my Crystal Knights! Isn't that neat?

You are just turning them into your slaves by brain washing them!

…no. You got it all wrong.
My crystalizer just changes their perspective on life unlike how my old master wanted it to be designed.
* chuckles *
Then again, I don't know why I am explaining this to you.
Perhaps I actually enjoyed your company? Who knows.

I... I cared about you, Maizie!
And you did this to us in return!
Just wait until the rest of city hears about this!

* smiles *
Who said anything about them hearing about this in the first place?

Excuse me, my queen but when can I see my wife and children?

You will see them soon, Mr. Cart.
As soon as we crystallize them, I will let you know.

* wipes off her tears *
What... what even is your end goal?
Why are you acting nice to him... and me?!

I’m not a monster, Clara.
They have free will when they are loyal to me.
* looks at her in the eyes *
Same goes for you.

Maizie checks the time and realizes it was late.

(tired) It was nice chatting with you, Clara.
Just to remind you of something; Not everything about our friendship was a lie.
I wish we could have spent more time together but sadly I need to go to now.
I wish I didn’t have to resort to this!

…

Do you have any last words?

I… I LOVED YOU!
AND YOU DID THIS TO US… TO ME!
I WON’T LET YOU GET AWAY WITH THIS!

...
* snaps her fingers *
You two, crystalize her please.

NO, NO, NO, NO!
LYDIA, TERRY, ANYONE HELP ME!
PLEASE!

Maizie goes upstairs to sleep while Clara was screaming as loud as possible. She wanted anyone... SOMEONE to hear her cries for help. But it didn't change her inevitable fate. Maizie was finally happy to sleep with her actual clothes for a change instead of that tiresome hoodster outfit. She grabs a photo from her bag and looks at it while laying on her bed.

* sheds a tear *
Don't worry sweetheart. I will... I will bring you back.
* looks outside *
Our plan is going perfectly so far.
We are gonna crystalize the whole city tomorrow and wait for the perfect opportunity to strike.
Just hang on for a little longer…

“Please…”

* holding the toaster *
And that's why we think Xtress' magic transformed G into a toaster.

That's the funniest thing I heard today.

CHAPTER 16: A WHOLE NEW DIMENSION

Nothing. That's what Bushra was feeling for the last few hours. It was cold. Just a few minutes ago, Bushra remembered standing alongside his friends and then blindly chasing after Hood after seeing her take advantage of the situation. Frankly, he didn't remember anything after that. Did G and the little potato also make it? Who knows. Then Bushra finally woke up. He felt something lightly... punching him?

Ugh… what happened?

Bushra notices something lightly hitting him and looks over his shoulder. It was PotaTeo.

Hello little dude!
I'm awake now, don't worry.

PotaTeo started jumping around in happiness. Bushra was trying to figure out where they were.

Did you find G anywhere around here, little dude?

PotaTeo shrugs. Bushra knew G coming with them was a low possibility but he held hope until he was certain. He clears his eyes and looks around. It was like looking at a very weird painting inside a museum. The air, the trees in front of them and even the ground they were standing on was made out of some kind of red material. They were all breathing just fine but the smoke was draining. Bushra looked at PotaTeo and saw that he too was feeling the exact same. Bushra called PotaTeo near him and then picked him up.

Don't worry little dude.
We... we will destroy that mean jerk and get out of here!

PotaTeo looked determined. Bushra smiled back despite not feeling so well because of the smoke.

That's the spirit!
Come on, let's find G!

The two started walking towards the forest. It was such a bizarre experience. Everything was stationary, nothing moved while they were moving. There was no wind to affect the trees either. Although strangely enough, Bushra spotted a point where the trees started to disappear. Almost like something or someone was tampering in this place before them. Bushra suddenly heard running from behind one of the trees and instantly went into his battle stance. He walked towards the tree with Teo next to him. When he looked closer, he saw the person he was dreading to encounter once more.

Meanwhile on Perdiah, inside the Enchanted Forest;

I’m boreddddd….

Shut up, Joyce.
We are almost at our destination!

Ugh… fine.

Excuse me, sir Markus?

(sigh) What is it, Murray?

Can we stop here?
I need to pee.

OH, FOR THE LOVE OF-
* stops the drone *
COME BACK IN 5 MINUTES.

Y- yes, sir!

Murray runs to the forest in embarrassment.

* takes a deep breath *
I can't with him sometimes.

Ugh…same!
Why are we tolerating that idiot again!?

Because he is a technical genius.
He saved our butts so many times at this point.
* looks around in a quick fashion and chuckles *
Don't tell him that though.

Sure laddie… but ah still say we ditch him.

Markus sighs out loud and then sits down and starts smelling the ground.

WHAT ARE YA DOING MATEY?!
HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MARBLES?!

Us ex-hoodsters can smell other hoodsters nearby, remember?

Oh… right.
But why are ya doing this now?

I'm trying to track down that Maizie person Murray has been talking about.

Markus notices Joyce looking all confused.

The lady in blue with brown spiky hair? Remember?!

Uh huh… wait a second.

Yes?

Does that mean... ah have those sniffing powers too?!

Yeesh, I knew Hood's teaching was terrible but not THIS awful.

Seems like I have a lot to learn from ya, boss-man!

Yeah, yeah…

Murray looks inside the woods.

“This better be worth it, Murray…”

YOU!

* smiles *
Hello there, pumpkin.
Did you miss me?

Yep!
I missed kicking your BUTT!

Hood dodges his attack with ease.

Oh come on, pumpkin.
You know I don't want to resort to violence!

(confused) Huh.
* stops attacking her *
Why are you even doing this, Hood?

Just my usual doing.

Hood starts walking around the two in circles.

Say, when did you become this resourceful?
I don't remember you being like this.

One, don't talk to me like I'm your friend, G learned it the hard way.
Two, Sarpo taught me a lot of things.

That buffoon?
I wouldn't listen to his words, if I were you.

Says the one who murdered millions.

OW!

Bushra looks at her, all confused. He then notices PotaTeo hitting her on the foot.

Can you tell your pet potato thing to stop hitting me?!

* smirks *
I think he has every right to continue whatever he is doing, Hood.

Oh, get off your high horse!
This is seriously irritating.
Also don't even make me remind you of the person you once were!

What are you implying here…

Haven't you ever thought what would happen if you never got these powers?

I… never did.
That’s irrelevant, Hood.

You would have become one of MY hoodsters, pumpkin.
Think of all the possible things you could have done if not for... G!

SHUT IT!
* grabs her by the jacket *
The only reason you are even alive right now is that we don't know how to go back... thanks to YOU!
* throws her to the ground *
Now get up and help us find that red wizard!

* tries to get up *
His name is Xtress.

(lying) I knew that.
* grabs PotaTeo while he was still punching Hood *

Stop hurting her, little dude... for now.

Geez, thanks pumpkin.

Don't mention it.

Bushra helps Hood stand up (just for once) and the three continue walking down the forest. Bushra was surprised that Hood wasn't affected by the smoke around them. He looked at PotaTeo to see how he was handling things. He seemed upset after losing his father figure not once, but twice. He wanted to talk to him about it but he still knew he wasn't really classified to talk about stuff like this. PotaTeo seemed like he was hungry so Bushra decided that the entire group should relax for a bit.

Yo Hood, let's just take a little break before we continue walking!

Big pass, pumpkin.
I'm not giving up just because you got tired!

Meh, suit yourself.
* puts PotaTeo on the ground *
See you later if you come back alive!

* smirks *
Typical.

Before Hood could go anywhere, they hear a loud roar coming from another place. Bushra stood up immediately and grabbed PotaTeo. It looks like they found their target already.

Well Hood. It looks like we are going to do it your way after all.

Figured as such.
Lead the way pumpkin!

All three of them started following where the roar came from until they saw... him. They hid behind one of the trees just in case. They saw Xtress on top of a circle made out of wood parts. He was casting spells on it but it didn't seem to be working. The wizard suddenly grabbed a piece of wood and threw it away.

ARGHHHH!

ENOUGH!

(whisper) What is he doing?

(whisper) I am as clueless as you are, pumpkin.

IT'S NOT WORKING!

* throws a fireball at a nearby rock out of frustration *

LET ME OUT OF HERE!

Bushra noticed he was holding his chest while casting his spells. He almost looked... tired? He was barely able to stand. Bushra was thinking if he and PotaTeo were also affected by whatever was

affecting him. PotaTeo starts jumping all over the place as a result and accidentally breaks something.

WHO'S THERE?!

ANSWER ME!

While Bushra tried backing away with PotaTeo, he notices Hood running towards Xtress with a big smile on her face.

Hello master!

WHO ARE YOU?!

I'm your right hand-lady, remember?

Right-hand… lady…

Bushra runs towards them to stop Hood from doing something stupid.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

What I came here to do!
* looks at Xtress *
They are trying to stop you from going back to Perdiah!
KILL THEM!

T- THEY ARE?!
I WILL DESTROY THEM!

* smirks *
Yes… YES!
* points at the two *
Get them, master!

Bushra dodges Xtress' attack and makes Xtress hit the trees behind him instead. Bushra runs towards Hood as she tries to run away from him.

I CANNOT BELIEVE YOU, HOOD!
You sold us out that easily?!

You better believe it, pumpkin!

You are a sick maniac!
* sees a water like substance next to a red rock *
Get a taste of your medicine!

URGH!

The substance holds Hood in place just enough that Bushra could catch up with her.

* smirks *

Not so cocky now, are you?

MASTER!
THEY ARE OVER HERE!

PotaTeo notices Xtress dashing towards them and blocks his attack by turning large.

DARN IT!

Nice job, little dude!
Keep him away for a bit!
* looks back towards Hood *
As for you... how did you manage to keep him under your control?!

Hood laughs and points at the violent sorcerer.

* smirks and points at Xtress
Look at him, pumpkin.
He is not fully himself.
This place did... a number of things on him.
He isn't used to being here in an unfrozen state.

I know that!
* hears screaming coming from Xtress *
I don't have time to deal with you OR your shenanigans right now!

Bushra pulls out his fishing rod and uses its rope to tie her up. He hoped this would keep her in one place for a while.

HEY! What's the big idea?!

Oh, shut up.
I'm going to help the little dude out while you can rethink your life choices.

Keep dreaming, pumpkin!
You will need it!

JUST SHUT UP!

Bushra runs towards the battle field to help his buddy out with a determined face.

Hmpf…

ARGH!
* looks at PotaTeo *
Wait... I REMEMBER YOU!
YOU ARE ONE OF MY CREATIONS!

PotaTeo doesn't respond back and continues attacking him.

If you won't willingly return to your rightful father...
* uses his magic *
I will make sure you WILL!

PotaTeo's eyes start to turn red and he starts rolling towards Xtress.

THAT'S RIGHT!
Return to papa, vegetable!

Bushra splashes his face with the water-like substance to stop his spell.

ARGH!
CURSE YOU, FISH!

Don't mention it, ugly!
* looks at PotaTeo *
It's okay little dude, don't listen to him!
* sees Xtress firing projectiles at them *
Stay with Hood, little dude.
I will cover for you!

PotaTeo runs away and Bushra manages to keep Xtress in one place with his powers.

LET ME GO, YOU IMBECILE!

I'm gonna need you to stop whatever you are doing to Perdiah...
* smiles and shows off *
... or you will face dangerous consequences by yours truly.

I... HAVE CONTROL OVER PERDIAH?

(confused) Ye... yes? You don't know?!

SILENCE, MORTAL!
I WILL DESTROY YOU, THEN DESTROY THE PLANET AND-

Xtress stops glowing bright red for a brief second and starts glowing again.

Where- where am I...

(confused) What is up with you-

Xtress suddenly breaks out of Bushra's powers, much to Bushra's shock.

YOU CANNOT STOP MY PLANS , FISH!

Xtress teleports away in the blink of an eye. Bushra was confused about... everything really. Was Xtress honest about not intentionally affecting Perdiah? He had so many questions. He then remembered Hood and got worried. He then thankfully saw Hood still sitting and waiting for him.

Well, we didn't catch your boss Hood but we at least have you.
* looks at PotaTeo *
Please help me carry her, little guy.
We still need to find Xtress.

HAH!
You two will never find my glorious master! He could be ANYWHERE!

They hear another roaring sound coming from behind them.

You were saying?

(sigh) Let’s just go there already…

PotaTeo nods and the three continue their journey. It was just like how they started except one of them was now tied up. Hood notices Bushra thinking deeply about something.

Thinking about your failure, pumpkin?

No.
* looks at PotaTeo *
We need to get out of here very soon, little dude.
I don't want to end up like... him.

Back on Perdiah; the Rascals were still trying to find Maizie. They went past a tree house and couldn't help themselves from looting it.

You think what I'm thinking, boss-man?

Oh yes I do, Joyce.

Umm... shouldn't we focus on finding Maizie?

Nah, that can wait.
We gotta do mah mama's way!
"Loot first, do missions later" she used to say.

I… can believe that.

Acting all snarky doesn't fit ya, Murray.

(sad) I know…

Are you two done arguing?!
Just help me open this door already!

Unknown to them however, this place wasn't abandoned at all. In fact, the owner of this house was just approaching his house.

Oh no… they found me.

CHAPTER 17: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

It was a terrible day on Perdiah. Everything turned for the worse when the supposed "heroes" went to another dimension to defeat an ancient sorcerer. And the remaining MPC2 members were stuck inside their own facility, not being able to say anything about their surroundings.

Are you sure all the doors are locked, Artender?

Yeah, I'm sure of it.
* looks around *
Have you seen Sarpo though?

Yes, he has been on the phone for an hour now.
* sees Artender walk towards Sarpo's room *
I would NOT recommend that, he likes his privacy-

Artender opens the door and sees Sarpo talking to 5 phones at the same time.

One sec, Ms. Cart.
Now please just calm down, sir!
We are trying to send help!
Ma'am, please don't ask me where your dog is-
SIR, ARE YOU THERE?!

Um… bad timing, I presume?

Sarpo sighs and ends all of his calls.

What do you want, Artender?

I just… wanted to talk to you.

* looks at the time *
Sure, my shift is about to end anyway.
* stands up and runs towards Ms. Meow *
Hey, Cloe. My shift is over.
Can you respond back to all of those people now... if you don't mind?

* kisses him on the cheek *
Of course, hon.
I will get there in just a second.
* points at the coffee machine *
I just need to get my coffee.

* blushes *
Thank you, Cloe...
You are a lifesaver.

Sarpo watches Ms. Meow grabs a cup of coffee and goes inside the office. He sits down next to Artender.

Please proceed.

Alright…

Artender opens his backpack and pulls out a familiar looking toaster.

I don’t know what to do with… G.

(tired) I told you to put him somewhere comfy.
Please don't tell me you came here JUST to talk about this.

No- no!
Not at all.

(relieved) Thank goodness. So glad you won't go on for another 30 minutes just talking about how funny G becoming a toaster is.

Heh…
What I came here to talk about is… you.

Me?

Yep!

* stands up *
You are a guy with a strong will!
You are not a person who would give up in times like this!
I have no idea what happened to you these past few days to cause this.

I... I am ashamed of myself.

A lot actually.

* looks around *

The people hate us, we don't know what happened to Bushra and PotaTeo and worst of all, I CAUSED ALL OF THIS.

(confused) What are you talking about?

Mate... I let Hood play me like a fiddle... AGAIN!

* closes his eyes with his hands *

And worst of all... I'm scared Cloe will leave again...

Isn’t her circus not a thing anymore?
If so, why would she do that?

I'm incompetent... It's only a matter of time before she realizes that...

Sarpo couldn’t handle more of the pressure and starts crying right next to Artender. Artender didn’t know how to make him feel better. Sarpo drinks a bottle of water to calm down.

I really miss my old routine sometimes.

Just beating up hoodsters, telling Hood to piss off, rinse and repeat.
Times were much simpler back then…

Why not go back to that action packed lifestyle?

There are people counting on me to protect them now.
There's a whole city out there, defenseless.

Hm… tell you what.
* reaches out his hand *
Maybe try living like the "good old days" for once and see if you are far happier that way.
Would you agree?

I… don't even know what to say…
I accept!
After this whole fiasco is over and done with, I'm going to take your advice on this!

I'm glad to hear it.

Also Artender?

Hmm?

It's awesome to see you mature since we first met a few months ago.
But may I ask, aren't you worried about what might happen to PotaTeo in the Nor Plane?

* smirks *
Not at all.
I know my boy can take care of himself and Bushra.

“You better believe it!”

Yo, boss-man!

What is it, Joyce?

I think the house owner just arrived, sir-

Shut up, Murray!

Okay…

Hello there!

Hello, ya’ punk!
Upset we are stealing from ya’ precious home?!.

* laughs *
Nope, sad because I have to get my hands dirty because of you three.

(sarcasm) Ooooo, I'm so intimidated... NOT.

Can ah attack him already, boss-man?
Pleaseeeee!

(sigh) Fine.
Make it quick and snappy.

YASSSS!
* grabs Murray's left arm *
Let's go, Murray! Ya’ useless scum!

Wow, I'm very flattered by you guys' attitude.
* goes into his battle stance *
Unfortunately, I will have to wipe the smiles out of your faces!

ENOUGH TALK!
* throws a potion at him *
TAKE THAT!

Nice throw!
* catches the potion mid-air *
Should work on your aim a bit though.

WHAT?!
No one catches my potion and gets away with it!
* looks at Murray *
MURRAY!

Y- yes?

Do ya' thing!

Murray quickly pulls out a metallic boomerang out of his bag and throws it at the stranger. He dodges it and realized it was still following him. He thought the boomerang was programmed to follow its target around so he uses it to his advantage. He runs away from the area and grabs a stick from the ground. He hits the boomerang with the stick and then punches the boomerang with his hand. While watching the stranger, Markus sees a strange glow coming out of the stranger's hand. The stranger then picks up the metallic remains.

Woah, nice one dude!
* throws the remains at them *
Gotta say though, expected far more.
* points at Markus *
Is it your time to attack now, mustache minister?

INITIATE: PLAN LOGIC!

The stranger watches as the Rascals go into their battle formations.

Cute.
You have code words for this type of stuff.
Gotta admire the effor-

I will make ya shut ya' dang mouth if ya don't... STOP TALKING!

Can’t help it, cowboy lady!
* looks around *
Are you guys actually going to attack or-

NOW!

Oh boy, NOW we are talkin’!

Just as they were about to strike, they saw a whole tree turn into a weird substance. Then they see all of the trees starting to get absorbed by the substance, creating a weird blob monster.

What in the world-

Meanwhile inside Diamond City;

PLEASE!
SOMEONE HELP!

A little girl was running away from objects with eyes and monster teeth. She ran as fast as she could before tripping and falling down. It

felt like it was all over for her until...

BEGONE MONSTERS!

Sarpo jumped down from a building and started attacking the monsters with all of his tools. The boomerang, the comically large fan, literally all the thrill he missed was here. The remaining monsters ran away as a result.

Are you okay, little one?

I… I am.
Thank you, sir!

Glad to hear, kiddo!
What's your name?

It's Emily, sir.

Alright, Emily.
Do you have any relatives nearby?
We should let them know you are safe and sound.

…no, I don't have any, sir.
Sorry.

Oh... I'm sorry, I didn't-

It's okay, sir.
You don't have to blame yourself for it!

* tears up *
Thank you, Emily...
* holds her hand *
Tell you what, I will help you out when this fiasco is all over!

I-
* smiles *
I would love that, sir…

I'm glad to hear it, little one.
* looks around *
Though, I have one favor to ask of you.

What is it?

Do you know where the rest of the townsfolk ran off to?

* points at her left *
They went THAT way!

Thanks, Emily!
* pinches her cheek *
Go hide somewhere safe, alright?

Okay!

See you soon, Emily!

Goodbye, sir!

Sarpo runs off to find other survivors only to find Ms. Meow and Artender cleaning up the remains of the monsters.

(disappointed) Aw man... Didn't think you guys would finish them off this quickly!

* chuckles *
Speak for yourself, hon.
We barely handled them!

Yeah man, the whole city is a mess now!

(sigh) Glad to see you two all okay too.
* looks around *
Do we know why the strange occurrences started happening more frequently, Cloe?

Perhaps it's a result of Bushra and Teo dealing with Xtress?

Solid theory.
* sits on top of a rock *
The question is, what do we do now?

(determined) We continue helping people until they come back.

"No matter how long that takes!"

* peeks behind a rock *
WHAT THE HECK IS THAT BOSS-MAN?!

Silence, Joyce.
* also peeks behind a rock *
We don't know where this blob looking thing came from.
And most importantly, we don't know where that blond freak went.

* tips his hat *
You called?

HE IS HERE!

Thanks for stating the obvious, bald one.
* sits *
As much as I want to kick you guys' butts, I think it would be more beneficial for all of us if we kill that thing first.

The enemy is unfortunately right, boss-man!
Maybe it can pick up that thing's lasers!

It has lasers?!

Yep.
Crazy strong ones too!

No one asked for ya' opinions, Mur-

No, no. Let the bald one speak.
Maybe it might be important.

* smiles *
As I was saying… I think if we manage to put one of my remote bombs inside that thing, we might get rid of it for good!

You are a bit of a smart lad, aren't ya?

I-I guess..?
Thanks!

ENOUGH TALK!
We have a solid plan to work with now.
Joyce, you take Murray. And I take the blonde guy.

I have a name too, you know?

Do you think I really care?

Before Array could respond back, he notices a laser coming towards Markus and blocks with a blue gauntlet, shaped like a

bulky glove, stuck to his arm.

* fake smiles *
I would certainly appreciate if you did.

(sigh) What's your name?

The name's Array!
Array Thunder.
A pleasure to meet you!
What's yours?

Keep dreaming punk.
I'm not telling you any of my names.

* shrugs *
Was worth a shot.

BOSS-MAN! WE ARE IN POSITION!

GOTCHA!
Move out Rascals… and Array!

The 4 of them rush towards the blob monster. Joyce throws her potions at the thing to slow it down, Markus shoots at its weak points with his arrow and Murray lends Array one of his remote bombs. Array runs towards the blob beast, distracts it and causes it to open its... mouth? He then throws the bomb inside it and runs away. After the explosion, they don't see any remnants of its existence.

We… we did it!

We sure did, ya’ son of a gun!

(tired) Is party time over now?
Because I "kindly suggest" you three give me back my stuff THIS instant.

I'm afraid that's not possible.

Why not?

(visibly uncomfortable) Because we implanted a bomb in this area which should explode roughly... in a minute!

W-WHAT?!
I helped you guys with the monster and THIS is how you repay me?!

I’m so sorry!
I didn’t want it to come to this-

SHUT UP MURRAY!
WE NEED TO SCRAM A.S.A.P!

Right on the money, Joyce!
* reaches out to Murray's bag to pull out the drone *
So long, Array! It was fun!
We will remember you... when we use your cash!
HAHAHAHAH!

Array watches the three fly away, powerless to stop them.

Darn it, Array.
You should have handled them right there!
* turns back and looks at his house *
(sigh) I wish... he was here to see this place safe and sound before this happened…
* takes a breath *
It doesn't matter now, I NEED to get out of here!

Array ran away from the area as fast as he could. Shortly after, he heard explosion sounds coming from behind him. He wanted to look back but he never did out of embarrassment. It was time for him to start over a new life... once more.

CHAPTER 18: ESCAPE FROM THE NOR PLANE

Cold... so cold... That's what Bushra could only feel while traversing through Nor Plane. He and PotaTeo were trying to find Xtress in this seemingly never ending place. It started out easy with them following Xtress' terrifying roars but then it just... stopped. They had no idea where to go. They continued searching for his whereabouts while a tied up Hood was laughing at every little mistake they made. Bushra tried to ignore her for the sake of PotaTeo but it was becoming too grating, even for him. They decide to take a break. Bushra tells PotaTeo to drop Hood right next to a boulder.

Bushra, darling?

(sigh) What is it, Hood?

You know, pumpkin... You are a bit of a smart guy!

I don't really care what you think of me, Hood.
* looks at PotaTeo *
I know you are a tired little dude but we are almost there!

* smirks *
According to who?

Bushra tries to ignore Hood and looks at his little buddy instead. PotaTeo’s hands were twitching.

Is something wrong, little dude?
You don't seem alright.

Imagine if we had hospitals nearby that could help us...
OH WAIT! There is none!

Can you... PLEASE shut up for once?!

Why should I, pumpkin?
I’m having the time of my life.

While you are all tied up?

Indeed.

(sarcasm) As for why… Gee, I don't know?
Maybe because you are annoying?
Shocker, I know!

It's just how I am, pumpkin.

For goodness sake... What I wouldn't give to not deal with your stupid shenanigans right now!

You know, speaking of which... Let's talk about THAT specifically!

Don’t you dare.

Imagine if you were one of MY hoodsters, pumpkin!

(angry) I told you to NOT talk about th- URGH!
* drops to the ground while holding his chest *
What's... happening to me...

PotaTeo rolls over to help Bushra.

Oh it's probably nothing, pumpkin!
Now, let's continue talking about that hoodster thing!

Bushra tries his hardest to ignore her and calm downs PotaTeo while holding his chest.

You know why you are in this situation, pumpkin?
* doesn't get a response *
That's right! MPC is the reason why you are stuck in this constant torture!

URGH... St... stop..

Think about it!
They didn't let you leave that stupid city, used you for a suicide

mission AND now got you trapped in this dimension!

* still holding his chest *
How... how do you know about these...

Ms. Furballl told me a lot about your little adventures!
* sees PotaTeo rolling towards her *
Do not even dare, stupid potato!
If you attack me, I will not hesitate to kill him!

YOU MONSTER!

Hood smiles as her ring starts glowing bright red.

ENOUGH OF THIS!
YOU WILL SERVE ME!

URGH!

You will untie and then become one of MY hoodsters!
Whether you like it or not!

Bushra felt like he was losing control of his body. He helplessly watched as PotaTeo looked at him with tears in his eyes. Bushra's eyes started turning red and his heartbeats started beating faster. He barely felt like himself... before remembering something crucial. Someone so important to him…

Hey Bushra, where are you going?

(sigh) It's over, G. Sarpo got captured, we don't have enough food, the connection is terrible AND we are gonna freeze to death!

* spits out snowflakes *
But but-

I don't really care, G.
Let's just continue moving-
* drops to the snowy ground while holding his chest *
URGH!

A-Are you alright?

I don't really care, G.
I'm... fine.
* tries to stand up but fails *
Just got a cold, that's all.

* reaches out his hand *
You know you can always ask for help, right?

I know but I'm just too cool, (figuratively and literally), to ask for help.

* smiles *
That’s what I’m talking about!
That’s the Bushra I know!
* points at a nearby tree *
Come on dude! Race ya' there!
(sarcasm) Let's see who is too "cool" to ask for help now!

* smirks *
(Heh, what a weird fool)
Wait for me, G!

Before Bushra lost full control of his body, he started breathing slowly and with spaces in between. His eyes turn to normal and he manages to stand up, much to Hood's shock.

HO- HOW?! YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE MIND CONTROLLED!

* smirks *
Guess your weird magic ring didn't work quite as you expected, Pumpkin Lady!

THAT’S MY GIMMICK!

Yeah, whatever.
* looks at PotaTeo *
Sorry for making you feel worried, little dude.
I promise it won't happen again.

(sarcasm) Boo hoo, what a sad and emotional moment!

* looks back at Hood *
After this is all over, you are going back to your cell.

(sarcasm) Oooh, I'm SOOOO intimidated!

Hm...
* sees PotaTeo rolling towards him *
What's up, little dude?
Did you find something?

PotaTeo nods and points in a direction. Bushra carries Hood until they reach the cliff of a... mountain? PotaTeo points under them and they see... Xtress! They actually found him! He was still trying to cast spells to get out of Nor Plane.

Hm… impressive.

Sure is, Hood.
Sure is.
* looks at PotaTeo *
So what should we do, little dude?
Attack when his back is turned? Or attack before he-

YOU!

Crud.
We need to get out of here!

If you free me, I can save us!
I have a parachute that we can use-

NEVER!

* smirks *
Your funeral, pumpkin.

…fine.
I will never forgive myself for what I'm about to do!

Bushra grabs a nearby sharp object and cuts the fishing rod to pieces, freeing Hood in the process.

FINALLY!
That was spot on, pumpkin!
I wasn't joking when I said you would have been a great hoodster!

You….

Eh?

THAT WAS G'S GIFT FOR ME!
YOU SICK-

Yeah, yeah, continue whining.
* opens the parachute *
Better grab on before the maniac catches up to us!

PotaTeo jumps on top of Bushra's hat. The two run towards Hood and grab on to her legs.

FOOLISH MORTALS!
THERE'S NOWHERE TO RUN!

Xtress throws a fireball towards the parachute and the trio start falling to the ground.

WE ARE FALLING!

Bushra looks around in panic and notices the water like substances he used before in a nearby "lake".

Don't worry, guys!
I have an idea!

YOU BETTER HURRY PUMPKIN BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME!

Hold on…

* tries to control them but it doesn't work *
It's out of my range! We need to get closer!

OKAY!
GET READY!

I GOT IT!
* creates a slide out of the substance *
You can let the parachute go now!

ALRIGHT!

Both Hood and Potateo slide down alongside Bushra from the behind. After Bushra reached the end of the slide, he shouts at the other two.

HURRY UP, GUYS!
It's only a matter of time before he-

NO ESCAPE!

* looks at Hood dead in the eye*
Alright Hood, use your ring thingy to weaken Xtress.
And if you DARE to betray us again after this, I will make sure you get placed in a worse cell!

Point taken.

Hood uses her ring to stun Xtress in one place while Bushra and PotaTeo attacked Xtress. Xtress was getting angrier with each blow.

I WILL NOT FAIL!
* creates a wall around himself *
NOT AGAIN!

You ruined so many people's lives!
I am not letting you leave this place!

YOU THINK IT'S THAT SIMPLE?!
* shoots at a fireball at Bushra but he dodges it *
OF COURSE YOU MORTALS THINK THAT WAY!

I know darn well you still would attack innocent people after getting out of here!

HAHAHA!
YOU KNOW ME TOO WELL, FISH!
* tries to create a sword out of nothing and fails *
HRGH! I NEED TO RESTORE MY MAGIC FIRST!

Too bad for you!
You are not getting your powers back anytime soon!

YOU THINK SO?!
* raises his hand and creates a hole on the ground *

LEMME SHOW YOU! WULLAH!

* realizes the ground he was standing on disappeared *
OH NO!

Right before Bushra fell into the hole, a familiar face grabbed his hand. But it was someone who he didn't expect. Someone who didn't have hands before...

WHAT?!

* the figure helps him get out of the hole *
Potato dude... YOU HAVE HANDS NOW?!

PotaTeo gives him a thumbs up with his new grown hands.

Yeah whatever, congrats I guess pumpkin.

I can't believe it!
* holds PotaTeo's hand *
Artender is going to be so happy!

* starts casting a spell *
Speaking of vegetables... RETURN TO YOUR MASTER!

Oh no, you DON’T!
You are not pulling that trick again!

YOU FOOL!
YOU THINK THAT CAN STOP MY MIND CONTROL SPELL?!
* Bushra splashes the substance to Xtress' face *
ARGH!

That should keep you in your place.
* turns around to face Hood *
Hood, I want you to weaken Xtress even further!

You got it, pumpkin!

Wait... Hood... hoodster... YOU ARE A HOODSTER!

* smirks *
I didn't think you had the brain capacity to figure that out!
* grabs PotaTeo *
Let's finish this wizard guy once and for all, little dude!

I AM NOT A WIZARD, I AM A SORCERER!

Whatever, ugly!
* throws PotaTeo at him *
Get him, little dude!

* catches PotaTeo mid air *
HAH! DID YOU FORGET SO SOON?!
I CONTROL THE VEGETA-

Nope, he was just a distraction.
* rushes towards the confused Xtress and punches him in the face, leaving him lying on the ground *
That's what I'm talking about!

URGH!
* tries to teleport away but fails *
I... WILL NOT... CANNOT... LOSE!

Face it, bozo!
You are done for!
* notices Xtress grinning *
What’s so funny about that?

Pumpkin, I think we need to go-

Before Hood could finish her sentence, Xtress started glowing brighter than ever as the entirety of Nor Plane becomes pitch white alongside a white flash. However, it only lasted for just a single second. Bushra cleans his eyes and looks for Hood and PotaTeo. He finds PotaTeo lying on the ground without any fatal injuries. He picks him up and looks for Hood. He looks at the spot where he last saw Xtress only to see no one. He searches the now white colored Nor Plane and finds Hood.

Hood! There you are!
* runs towards her and sees Hood looking at her hands *
We finally defeated Xtress!
Now you can show us how to go back home!

Oh yes… sure.

Hm... you alright over there?

Yes, yes, of course.
First, you imbeciles need to hold your red rings like this!

(concerned) And?

You need to repeat after me!

* looks at PotaTeo *
Are you sure you are okay, Hood?

I'm fine... turnips! Or whatever she... I mean I say.
(ehem) Let's just cast the spell now...
* clears her throat *
"Enchant the stone, I call you. Continue to rest, I dare you. Now’s the time to get out of here!"

After Bushra repeats after her, a portal appears right in front of them.

Bushra hasn't seen Hood this happy before.

Let's go, you two!
We are finally going back home!
After all this time... we will be free...

Just hold on a second.

(frustrated) WHAT?!

You told us before that a portal happens with the power of 3 magic rings, correct?

Maybe, what are you trying to imply here?!

You said only people with Xtress' magic could open these portals.
Me and the little dude have powers, that makes two.
* points at her *
Where's the 3rd one then, "Hood"?

HRGH!

“Hood” runs towards the portal without warning.

Darn it!
* picks up PotaTeo *

We need to stop her, little dude! Come on!

The two run towards the portal and what remained of the Nor Plane crumbled to dust, never to be seen again.

Back inside MPC headquarters;

* looks at the toaster on the table *
How is it going, G?

Silence.

Oh right, you are still a toaster.
* looks at the clock *
Oh well. Guess my shift time just arrive-

Suddenly a red light flashes by on the table.

Hngh....
* realizes he was sitting on top of a table *
Uh, where are we Artender?

G?!

(confused) Uhh, hi?
Am I missing something?

You missed a lot of stuff, dude!
* points at the window *

There are monsters attacking the city, check it out for yourself!

* walks towards the window and looks outside *
Are you sure dude? There's nothing here.

Excuse you?

Yeah man, look for yourself!
* hears knocking sounds *
Umm, someone is knocking on the door, Artender.

I will get it!
(They better have answers for this)

* opens the door *
The creatures stopped showing up, Artender!
They did it! We won!

YES! I knew my boy could handle himself!

* notices G *
G?! You are back too?!

(confused) I was... gone to begin with?

Oh. This is gonna be difficult to explain...

Sorry to interrupt but may I ask... Where are they?

* thinks *
OH NO!

Cloe?!
What happened?

They might be in the ruins of Hood's cell!

You are right!

Sarpo runs towards the door and starts typing out the password.

“Follow me folks! This way!”

Hngh....
* sees PotaTeo trying to wake him up *
Hello little dude.
Are we back on Perdiah?

PotaTeo nods.

Seems like it.
* looks around *

If only I could figure out where we are... This place is barely recognizable.
Wait, is that-
* sees Hood lying on the ground *
Hood?

* wakes up *
Hngh... Where are we, pumpkin?

* grabs her by the shirt *
I could ask the exact same question to you!
What was the big idea back there?

…what?

Don't play dumb with me, Hood.
I don't know what your goal was but I assure you, I won't let you go scot free this time.

You always keep saying that, pump-
* gets hit by a boomerang *
ARGH! Who did that?!

Sup, Hood.
Had a fun vacation?

SARPO!

Hi, Bushra!
Congrats on the mission by the way!

Thanks, mate!
We beat Xtress but something feels missing…

* puts his hand on Bushra's shoulder *
You must be real tired after your mission.
I suggest you continue thinking about this later.
Besides, someone has been eagerly waiting for you!

Wait, you don't mean-

* enters the room *
Oh, hi Bushra!
Say, where were y-

G was gets startled as soon as Bushra rushed in to hug him. He never did something like this before.

Uh... dude, are you okay?

Yeah... I'm just... glad to see you again, buddy.

M-me too, dude…

Bunch of cry babies...

Speaking of whom...
* pulls out handcuffs from his hat *
You are under arrest, Hood.

...
Will there be Mandy & Friends?

(sigh) Yes, Hood.

Alright, I'm in.
* reaches out her hands *
Take me away, pumpkin.

Just like that, huh?

Yep. Just like that, pumpkin.
I'm a simple lady.

Alright, that's enough of your shenanigans.
* handcuffs Hood *
I'm putting you in another jail until this place is all fixed up.

Works for me.

* looks at Bushra *
Take care, pumpkin!
This was a fun adventure, we should TOTALLY do it again!
Toodles!

Bushra watches as Sarpo takes away Hood and leaves the room.

Weirdo...
* looks over to Artender and sees him playing along with PotaTeo *
(sarcasm) Yo Artender, I hope you are enjoying the consolation prize!

* crying from joy *
I cannot even begin to tell you how grateful I am.
* holds PotaTeo's hands *
My boy grew up so much...
I'm sorry I wasn't there when your hands grew, Teo...

PotaTeo starts feeling bad and jumps towards his dad to hug him.
This really was Artender's happiest day.

* smiles *
Huh, I made someone happy at least.

Is there something wrong, Bushra?

I am not... sure.
I saw Hood charging at the portal while acting strange.
And when I asked her why she did it, she was just as clueless as I was.

You know Hood, it's probably just her usual behavior.

Hm... I guess so.
I'm still not fully convinced though…

It's alright.
Well if you two will excuse me, I need to go.

Oh, leaving so soon?

Unfortunately so.
Sarpo needs my help with MPC related stuff.

No, no, it's alright.
Good luck with that.

Alright, thank you two.
See you later!

See you!

Bushra and G watch as Ms. Meow leaves the room. Only two of them were left in the room. Bushra felt a weird sense of deja vu for a moment. Even though everything went back to normal, he felt like they regressed back to where they began. Something just... wasn't

right.

(sigh) What an adventure that was.
Right, G?

I still don't know what you are talking about.

* chuckles *
Some things never change.

Meanwhile on another side of Perdiah, a red shadowy figure was clinging onto his dear life;

I FAILED... AGAIN!
THAT STUPID... FISH...
* punches a nearby rock *
I LOST MY MAGIC! AGAIN!
* tries to calm down *
But... how... Do I regain it... I wonder if... Temple Skulled is still in shape.
* creates a small holographic replica of a temple *
AHA! IT IS STILL ALIVE!
* looks around *
YOU THOUGHT YOU DEFEATED ME, FISH!
BUT YOU HAVE SEEN **NOTHING** YET!

CHAPTER 18.5: A GIRL'S FINAL DIRECTION

Months ago before the attack on Town Mercia;

* knocks on the door *
Emily, can you open the door for mommy?

Of course, mom!

Thank you, my sunshine.
* kisses her on the forehead *
What were you up to while I was away?
* looks at her clothes *
Let me guess, girl scouting again?

Yes, mom!
I met this funny looking guy and helped him today!

That's my girl!

YAY!
* sits down *
Hey mom! When is daddy coming back today?

At his usual time, dear.
Why did you ask?

Um...
* opens her bag to reveal a small plushie *
I bought him this!

Honey... you didn't have to…

I... just wanted to buy something for daddy's birthday!

Aw, honey...
* kisses her on the cheek *
You are too kind for this world.

* hugs her mom *
Thanks mommy.

They were interrupted once they heard sounds of people screaming outside.

(worried) What was that?!
* looks outside *
Oh... no.

Mo... mom?

Sweetheart, please stay inside.
Mommy will see what's going on.

What about daddy?!

I-I will find him, sweetheart.
* looks outside *
Everything is going to be alright, Emily.
Promise me you will be a brave girl, okay?

Okay mommy...

Good girl.
Mommy will take care of this, okay?

Okay...

Ms. Sharps kisses Emily on the cheek before leaving the house with a sad smile on her face. Emily, meanwhile, went inside her room and looked her plushie collection.

Sorry guys, I won't be able to take you all with me.
* waits for a response *

I knew you guys would get it! Thank you so much!

She then looked at the plushie she bought for her dad.

Okay Robert!
Let's show mom that we are brave, okay?

No response.

Good one, Robert.
(I'm freaking crazy)

She grabs Robert and wears him like a plush bag. Before she could leave the house, she heard screaming coming from outside.

EMILY, WHERE ARE YOU?

Mom!
* opens the door *
I'm here, mom! Are you alright?!

No Emily, this is far more serious than I thought.
* points at the bookcase inside the house *
Hide behind our secret room!

But... mo... mom...

Sweetie, please.
Do as I say-

What about daddy?!

Honey, I know you are scared but… you will be safe here.
Please stay there until me and your father come back.

Okay…

Emily hugs her mom and waves her goodbye as she left their home. Then Emily entered the secret room just like her mom said. She started waiting. At first, she didn't feel a thing. She just played with Robert and a few other plushies she had on her backpack. But then; seconds became minutes, minutes became hours and eventually, it happened. She heard a scream followed up by a gunshot. Emily didn't understand what was going on. Before she could leave the room, a bunch of hoodsters invade the house to steal materials for their leader.
Emily tried to stay quiet but... Her mom... she didn't want to imagine what happened to her precious mom after she left. She deluded herself into thinking both of her parents were still okay, they HAD to be okay... But alas, she couldn't handle it. She started crying and the hoodsters heard her cries. The two hoodsters broke down the bookcase and saw a little girl crying all by herself.

Number 3, we found another one!

Huh... this is a tiny one.
Do you think she will be useful, Number 2?

I'm not entirely sure, honey.
Let me check.
* leans over to the crying girl *
What's your name kid?
Do you know anything useful?

The girl didn’t respond back.

* chuckles *
You should probably sit this one out, honey.
That's not how you talk to little kids.

The hoodster watched as their love interest took off their hood.

Hello little girl, how are you?

Mo... mommy...
I... want to see my mommy...

Hm... (This is going to be trickier than I thought)
Tell you what, little girl.
* reaches out her hand *
Come with us somewhere safe, this is a pretty dangerous place.
Maybe our boss will like you.
She loves helping people out!

Will she... help find mom and dad...

"Who knows, we will both find out."

So who's this midget supposed to be?

Please be nice, ma’am.

Don't patronize me, Number 3.

You are pushing your luck!

Ehem, pardon me boss but...
* points at Emily *
What are we going to do with her?

Right.
So who are you supposed to be, little girl?

M-My name is Emily.
What's your name, mister…

Ms. Hood.
Hood for short.

Miss Hood, can you help find mom and dad?
They protected me from bad guys and I can't find them anywhere!

Hm...
* points at Member #2 *
Come here, Number 2.
I need to ask you something.

Of course, ma'am.

* whispers *
What on earth is this kid talking about?

* whispers back *

She thinks we saved her from "evil burglars".

Ooooh...
*starts smiling *
We can use this to our advantage.
What are the statuses of her parents?

The mother was killed on the scene and we are still looking for the dad.

Excellent.
Thank you for your time, pumpkin.
* looks back at Emily *
So... Emily, was it?

Yes, miss. Can you please help me?

Of course we will!
Right, you two?

YES, MA’AM!

We are so happy that you are here, Emily!
We are just a group of survivors trying to help out other survivors.
* points at her *
Would you like to join us in our quest for eternal peace?

I don’t know what that means but sure, YAY!
I love helping people!

* smirks *
That’s great to hear, pumpkin.
Now if you will excuse me, I’ll need you to stay still.

Oh?

Sorry, little pumpkin.
I forgot to tell you about this.
We all sing our anthem when a new member joins us!

(excited) Like girl scouts do?!

Yes, exactly like that.
Now, please close your eyes and listen to my words.

Okay!
Me and Robert are ready!

(Oh, I know you are…)

Emily closes her eyes as Hood starts chanting the spell. Member #2 and #3 watch in sadness as they convert yet another innocent person into a hoodster. Member #3 held Member #2's hand throughout the whole thing.

* holding her head *
Uh.... Did it work, Miss Hood?

It sure did, little pumpkin.

* puts her hand on Emily’s shoulder *
Now, let me show you your new friends...

"You are going to love it here!"

Where are we going, Miss Maizie?

I told you to refer to everyone by their numbers, Number 416.

I'm sorry...

It's all good.
But yeah, we are trying to find those two traitors.

Do you think they have mom and dad, miss?

Who knows, they might have them.
Say, where do you think they ran off to?

Hm...
* points at the mountain *
Maybe they went THAT way!

The cave next to The Mountain That Never Ends?
Are you sure?

Yeah! I wonder if mom is there... She loved climbing...

Hm... alright then.
* shouts at Member #2 *
Kid says they might be near The Mountain That Never Ends.
Take your group and let Hood know.

Will do.
But I need to ask, why did you waste your time with that?
We can still smell their location, you know?

* looks at Member #416 *
I just wanted to test something out.

Alright then.
* kisses Member #3 on the lips *
Good luck!

Good luck to you too, honey!
* turns around *
Hey, Number 416!

"Let's go eat some ice cream."

Excellent work, you two!

Tha... thanks, miss!

Gotta admit, little pumpkin.
Your "powers" are awe inspiring.
You are truly worthy of becoming one of my successors!

Emily doesn’t understand a thing but still nods anyways.

Okay!

I think you deserve an award for your efforts.

Woah, really?

Yes. Just hold still, pumpkin.
This will only hurt for a little bit.

Hood starts casting another spell but this time, she gives Emily her life essence back.

I don't feel different, Miss Hood.
* looks at Robert *
Robert doesn't feel a thing as well.
(confused) Is there something wrong?

No, not at all actually.
I'm just... surprised. That's all.
* looks at Member #3 standing next to Emily *
Come with me, Number 3. We need to talk.

As you wish.

Goodbye Miss Hood, goodbye Miss Maizie!

See ya, kid.

The two enter Hood’s office to talk.

Is Sarpo still in his cell?

Yes, ma'am.
He is still unconscious as well.

* smiles *
Perfect. Come with me, Number 3...

"We have a lot of stuff to do!"

Is your leg alright, Bushra?

Yeah it's fine, G.
* puts new batteries inside his flashlight *
Ugh, why are we searching here again in the middle of the night?!

Ms. Meow told us to search the area one final time before we left for good.
Not that I am against the idea or anything, I'm just wondering why she is so insistent on this-

Wait, did you hear that?

No? Must have been the wind.

* chuckles *
Gotta admit G, that was a good one.
But no really, I think heard something...

You sure?

Hold on a second.
...
Yeah, I'm sure of it. Follow me, G!

Right behind you, dude!

They run towards the ruins of the now destroyed base and listen closer. They walk around for a few minutes until they hear sounds of crying.

Oh no.
* reaches out to his bag *
G, we should probably call for help.
There might be other survivors here too.

Good idea.
* grabs Bushra's phone out of his hands *
(confused) Dude, what is this wallpaper?

For the love of Perdiah, G!
Now’s not the time!

Sorry, sorry. You are right!

I'm calling them.
You start helping them out!

I will try my best.

Bushra was still struggling to walk because of his leg injuries but he knew others' lives were at stake. He uses his water powers to lift the fallen objects to reveal…

Mom.. dad...

Oh geez...
* looks at her face *
Wait, I remember you!

Ro... bert...

* picks her up *
There's no time, G!

"We need to get her somewhere safe!"

Emily opens her eyes and looks around. She stood up and looked at the bench she was sleeping on. She grabbed Robert out of her bag and hugged him. After putting Robert back inside her bag, she started walking around the city. She saw three kids playing hopscotch together. She tried playing games with them before but they never liked having her around... or so she thought. Then she sees a familiar person doing an announcement in the center of the city.

Ladies and gentlemen!
We are finally free from Xtress' curse!
So that means I have a surprise for you!
Wait for it... HUZZAH!
Sarpo waits for something to happen with cricket sounds accompanying the silence in the area.

Ehem…I SAID… HUZZAH!

(Oh right.)

Bushra pulls the lever as Sarpo unveils the crowd's one way ticket home.

Tada! With these precious cars, everyone can go back home!
Isn't that cool?!

There was cheering coming from everywhere in the crowd. Sarpo was so happy to finally see the people he vowed to protect all happy. While he was looking at the crowd, he saw a familiar face. He wondered who that was... then it hit him.

Now that we are done here, I would just like to say good luck to everyone here.
* leaves the stage in a hurry *
Cheers!

Did I do good, Sarpo?

(not paying attention) Yeah, yeah Bushra.
You sure did.
* still looking at the crowd *
Talk to you two later.

See you too?

Huh, that was odd.
Oh, well… That's still good enough for me!
Say G, want to do something tonight?

Weren’t we going to watch a movie?

Meh, we watched that movie so many times already.
I say... we go fishing!

* smiles *
Never change Bushra, never change.

Meanwhile, Sarpo was trying to find a certain girl in the crowd. She was so small that Sarpo could not see her in the middle of everyone. He continued looking until she bumps into him.

Oh- hello there!
Emily, was it?

* giggles *
Yes, Mr. Sarpo!

* pats her on the head *
Good girl.
Wait...

Is something wrong, Mr. Sarpo?

* checks his phone *
Oh no...
* looks at Emily *
Uhm... I don't have much time left, kiddo.
Maybe some other time?

Oh. I... didn't know.
If you say so…

No no, I didn’t mean it like that.
I was just going to a restaurant with a... friend.

Oh, okay!
Well, I guess I can be patient!
Like Robert!

Sarpo was starting to feel guilty over the whole situation. He couldn’t just leave this poor girl all by herself, even after his promise.

* grabs Emily's hand *
Tell you what Emily, want to come with?

R-really?

Yes, really.
Your friend Robert can come with us too!

Did you hear that Robert?
We are going to eat something today!

(Oh man, what did I get myself into... and most importantly, how will SHE react?)

"Oh, here you are! I was wondering what took you so long!"

Sorry Cloe, I was... busy.

That's alright hon.
Please take a seat.
* notices a small girl holding Sarpo's normal hand *
Uh... who is that?

Well... how do I put this...

Oh my gosh!
Are you a kitty?!
* runs towards Ms. Meow and hugs her *
Woah, you are so fluffy!

H... hello, little one?
(annoyed) Sarpo, who is this?

Her name is Emily.

I promised her a few days ago that I would help her out.

* trying to keep a smile *
T-that's nice…

Cloe, I'm so sorry-

Save it for later, Sarpo.

Erm… sorry Ms. Kitty Cat but… can we eat now?
I'm hungry!

Yeah sure Emily.
Please sit next to the cat lady.

Okay!
* sits down and puts Robert in the middle of them *
What should we buy, Robert?

* whispers at Cloe *
Let's talk about this after we are done eating, okay?
I don't want the kid to see us argue.

(sigh) You are right, hon.
I guess we can talk later.

Thank you Cloe.
* sits down *
Hey! Can you take our orders?

Of course, sir.
* looks at Emily *
What do you want, little miss?

Hm...
* looks at Robert *
Sushi please!

Ooh... Of course, missy.
* writes it down and looks at Sarpo *
You sir?

Bulgur rice please, you Cloe?

...I will have what the little girl has.

Alright.
Please stand by.

Thank you for your time, sir.
* looks at Ms. Meow *
Say, what were you up to Cloe?
Any news about your clan?

Oh, I have just been helping people.
You know, the usual.
As for my people... I still haven't contacted them.

Why so?

Personal stuff.

Ah, sorry.

It’s alright.
* looks at Emily *
So... when or HOW did you meet this girl?

I was rescuing people from the monsters when I suddenly came across her.

I see...

Before Sarpo could respond, the three noticed the waiter arriving at their table with the meal.

Yay, our meal arrived!

Alright everyone.
Let’s start feasting!

YEAH!

All of them start eating. Sarpo and Ms. Meow took their sweet time while Emily was so fast that she ate everything on her plate before the two finished half of their dishes.

* holds Sarpo's robotic hand *
Mr. Sarpo, can I ask something?

Sure Emily.
What is it?

I'm still hungry... Can we get some more food?

Sure thing kiddo.
* calls the waiter *
More sushi for her, please!

Two hours later, they left the restaurant with smiles on their faces. Emily was still hanging around with Sarpo and Ms. Meow. They were walking towards Sarpo's car until Ms. Meow told Sarpo that she wanted to talk with him. Sarpo tells Emily to stay inside the car while they were talking.

So... what are your plans for her?

* yawns *
I might as well sleep inside the base again.
I don't want to leave the kid alone.

I don't know why you are sacrificing so much for her...

She is homeless, Cloe.
She doesn't have anyone taking care of her.

I'm just saying.
We have an orphanage just next door, you know?
So, why bother?

(frustrated) And what is YOUR deal with her?
Is it because she is a human?!

How DARE you?!
That’s so insulting!

How so?!
Are you willing to let this kid die?!

NO!
I just... I don't know how to deal with kids, okay?

(sad) Oh… so that's what it is.
* scratches the back of his head *
I'm… sorry for judging you too early, Cloe.
It wasn’t cool of me to do that.
But I made a promise to this girl!
I can't leave her behind now!

(sigh) I understand.
Perhaps I was a bit too harsh on her as well...
* chuckles *
Who knew things would still be difficult after we got rid of Xtress.

Yeah...
"Life still goes on," they said.
It really does, huh?

Sure does.

Sarpo notices Emily waving at him from the car door.

Sorry Cloe but I really have to go.
Talk to you, tomorrow!

…see you, hon.

Sarpo knew that Cloe wasn't still keen on the idea but he was determined to make it work. Even though he wasn't sure what to do with Emily yet, he was still determined to make her happy. He drove towards the MPC 2 headquarters and lets Emily inside. He shows her around the facility and prepares a bed for her.

Thank you Mr. Sarpo!

Don't mention it, kiddo.
Just want to make sure you are safe and well.

Emily suddenly gets up and hugs Sarpo, much to this surprise.

T-thank you!
I’m so happy you found me.

N-no worries, Emily.
Just rest well, alright?

Okay!

Sarpo tucks Emily in her bed.

Goodnight!
Say "goodnight" to Mr. Sarpo, Robert.

Sarpo looks at her in happiness before turning the lights off. The next morning, Emily woke up like usual but now, she finally felt what it was like to have a family again. She looked around to see Sarpo preparing breakfast for her and Ms. Meow watching him. She didn't know if they were a couple or not.

Good morning Emily, did you sleep well?

Yep!
Morning Miss kitty!

Uhm... Morning, kid?

Emily hears knocking on the door.

EEK!

(worried) Are you alright?

* points at the door *
Bad... bad guys are here!

Sshh, calm down Emily.
No one can hurt you here.
* looks at Cloe *
Cloe, can you check on the door?

Alright.

NO!
* pulls Ms. Meow's hand *
Please stay here! Don't go!

Bu... but-
* looks at Sarpo *
(sigh) Alright, Emily. I will stay.
Can you open the door instead, Sarpo?

Sure.

Sarpo opens the door only to encounter...

Sup Sarpo.
How is it going?

Oh, it's you guys.

Yeah? Were you expecting someone else?
(Also hi.)

Not really, no.

Alright… can you get us inside now?
It’s cold out here!

The two enter the headquarters and immediately notice the little girl sitting next to Ms. Meow.

Is that-

Oh hey, it's the girl who points in directions!
Now I remember!

You are right! I knew I recognized her from somewhere!
Wait… why is she here again?

Everyone in the room watches as Sarpo stands up. There was a sound of a door creaking coming from behind them but no one noticed.

She’s going to be the newest addition to MPC2!

WHAT?!

Wha-

Just let me explain first, okay?
* clears his throat *
I met her a few days ago while I was saving people from the monsters.
I promised to take care of her when I rescued her and decided that this would be the most ideal way to do it.
Any thoughts?

Not at all.

GAH!
* takes a step forward *
You REALLY gotta stop doing that.

Can't help it.
You ought to remember that the back door still exists.
Anyway, while you were doing your little "exposition" thing, I wanted to come over.
* points at his backpack *
With Teo, of course.

That’s nice.

Sarpo looked at Emily to see her reaction. She seemed like she was deep in her thoughts.

So… what do you think, Emily?
You are a part of our “family” now.

Well, I wouldn’t exactly call it “family”-
* G lightly hits his shoulder *
OW!

Don’t ruin the moment, dude.

Emily stands up and stares at her new family. She starts crying and rushes in to hug Sarpo. He also starts tearing up and hugs her back.

Tha... Thank you Mr. Sarpo!
For everything…

Oh, Emily... You are too precious for your own good.

Aww… that’s sweet.

* holds Emily’s hand *
Here, let me introduce you to the others.
* points at Team Bushra *

These are Team Bushra. G and Bushra respectively.
I'm assuming you met them before?

Yes, Mr. Sarpo!
I helped them find their way around the city.

* chuckles *
Really, you two?

Don’t blame us, buddy.
We were trying to find a place to fish.

He he!

Emily sees the potato with the top hat drawing something with a chalk and was fascinated by it.

Oooh!
* sits next to PotaTeo *
Hello, Mr. Potato Man!
How are you today?

* picks him up*
Yeah, he can't talk. Sorry.

Oh, that’s okay.
My friend Robert can’t talk either!

The plushie?
* chuckles *

Alright then.

That's all fine and dandy...
But may I ask the important question?

Yes, you may.

Where is she going to stay?

Everyone was looked at each other without saying a single thing. Emily was blissfully unaware of the situation since she was still talking with PotaTeo.

Can't she just stay here?
In the headquarters itself, I mean.

I stay in my own house so I can't stay here 24/7.
What about you, Cloe?

* looks at Team Bushra *
What about you two?
You already share a house together, why not let her stay with you?

Ehem... you see...
* chuckles nervously *
I don't think she would want to stay with us-

And why is that?

Don't tell them about what happened to that rat yesterday.

(shocked) I WASN'T GOING TO!
BUT NOW THEY KNOW!

DON'T PATRONIZE ME!
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO SET THAT TRAP UP!

OH FOR THE LOVE OF-

Yeah, I think that's a "no" from them.
Which leaves us with one option... Artender?

Hm...
Look Sarpo, I just got done fixing up my shack.
I would love to take care of her but I'm not sure if she will like environment much.

I see.
* looks over to Emily *
What about you, little one?
Would you like to stay with "Uncle Tender"?

Hm… maybe.
But I need to ask Robert first!

Emily talks to herself for a few seconds and looks back at Artender.

He said he would love to!

Heh... you are adorable.
Well then… welcome to the family, Emily!

Sarpo looks at Ms. Meow in content. He finally made amends with himself. He hoped Emily would have a bright future ahead of her. The "new" MPC 2 crew got to know Emily for hours on end while G and Bushra were still arguing with each other.

Welp, I know what to do tomorrow, then!
You are going to have your very own room soon, Emily!
What do you think?

I would love that, Uncle Tender!
You are so awesome!

No problem, Emily. He he...
* looks at the time *
Oh shoot, it's dinner time!
We need to go, you two!
* puts Teo in his backpack *
Come on Emily, I want to introduce you to your new home!

Okay Uncle Tender! Just a sec!
* runs towards Sarpo and hugs him again *
Thank you again, Mr. Sarpo!
* waves at him while following Artender *
Goodnight, see you tomorrow!

* tears up *

See you, Emily.

Are you finally happy now, Sarpo?

Yes, I am.
* sniffs *
Thank you Cloe.

No problem hon, just glad you are happy now.
We can talk about our plans tomorrow.
* looks behind her *
But we still have THEM to deal with first…

YOU MADE ME CLEAN OFF ITS REMAINS!

AND YOU MADE ME TRACK THAT THING DOWN FOR HOURS!

" Dinner time, children. "

Okay!
* sits down *
What are we going to eat?

Fried potatoes!

Oooo!
* starts eating but realizes something *

Wait. Uncle Tender, what will brother Teo eat?

You don't have to worry your pretty little head, Emily!
Teo LOVES eating fried potatoes!

Huh...
* looks at Robert *
Oh well. Let's eat, Robert!

After dinner, Artender showed Emily what was inside the shack. It was small but lovable, she thought. Artender was happy to hear that she was content with her surroundings. Emily stayed in PotaTeo's room for the time being while PotaTeo was gonna sleep in his dad's room for the time being.

So... Do you like it, Emily?

Yes, I love this place Uncle Tender!
Thank you!

No problem, Emily.
You can stay in your brother's room until I build you your very own room!

That's fine, Uncle Tender!
* sees Artender preparing to leave *
Um... can I ask something?

Oh-
* stops walking *
Uh... sure? What is it, Emily?

Can we meet with Mister Sarpo and his friends tomorrow?

Sure thing, Emily!
I'm sure they would love to spend time with you as well!

YAY!
We are gonna have so much fun!

He he…

Is there something wrong, Uncle Tender?

I'm just not sure if what we do around here fits a little girl like yourself...

Don't worry about me, Uncle Tender!
I was a girl scout, I can learn stuff quickly!

* chuckles *
Alright then.
* stands up *
I need to check up on your brother as well, Emily.
Good night! Don't let the bed bugs bite!

Good night! Love you!

* smiles *
Love you too, Emily.

Emily watches as Artender leaves the room and then picks up Robert.

Well Robert, it looks like we are in for many more adventures!

CHAPTER 19: FORGOTTEN MEMORIES

It was... quite an odd day on Planet Perdiah. After yet another battle against Xtress, the people were free once again. Everyone was in great shape... all except for one person. G was still processing what happened around him while he was turned into a toaster due to Xtress' magic. He felt ashamed that he couldn't help out his friends in the middle of all the chaos, doubly so when he heard about the journey Bushra went through. And of course... the flashes of an alternate past... His head was filled with thoughts similar to it. He looked down at Bushra, sleeping in his bed . It was night time, obviously. He looked at his pillow and then looked at the ceiling. He then closed his eyes, hoping that tomorrow would be a better day.

The very next day;

* cleans his eyes *
Hnrgh….

G, can you turn off the alarm?!

Wha-

The alarm, STUPID!

Since when did I-

UGH, whatever man!

Bushra gets up and closes the alarm himself.

Can you at least wear your clothes?!
I'm busy preparing breakfast for us!

G-got it!

G also gets up and looks around their home. Today seemed to be just an ordinary day. He walks towards the bathrooms and brushes his tuff of hair.

Ooh, I like this hair style!

It's the exact same style as always, G.

Way to ruin my mood again...

You should be used to that by now!
* points at the table *
Care to eat?

Yeah sure.

Both of them sit down to eat their breakfast.

Are you… okay, buddy?

Oh no, I'm fine.
Why come you ask?

I just realized that you aren't your usual joyful self recently.
Is something bugging you?

Well, I dunno how to explain it...
You remember what we talked about yesterday, right?

The whole toaster thing?

...yeah. Well I still feel upset over that, dude.
You at least had a rematch with Xtress while I… stayed as an inanimate object!
I just feel… useless.

G, look. I also felt that way in one of the old bases we trashed a long time ago.
It's just human nature.
* points at G's plate *
Now, hurry up! You know what we are going to do today.

I sure do.
It's... gonna be difficult managing stuff around here without **them**...
* takes a bite out of the pancake *
Mhm... WOAH!
What did you put in this thing, dude? This is great!

A recipe by yours truly!
I will let you in on my little secret once you are older.

We are the same age, dude.

Meh, details details.
* stands up *
I'm done eating by the way, you better hurry up!

Mhm... yeah, I'm also done.

"Let's hope we are not late..."

WAAAA!

Sssh... it's okay, little one.
They won't be gone for too long!

WHY ARE MS. KITTY AND MR. SARPO LEAVING?!?
* continues crying and hugs PotaTeo *
You won't leave me, right little brother?

PotaTeo shakes his head.

YAY!
Thank you, brother Teo!

I didn't think she would react like that...

Don’t worry, hon.
We are just going on a short vacation anyways, right?

* smiles *
Yeah… I guess you are right.

Now where are those two...

SORRY, SORRY!
WE ARE HERE NOW!

There they are, where have you two been?
Did you forget the time... again?

No, no!
We just woke up a bit late.

Who’s “we”?
You are the one who got up late!

I honestly don't care which one of you started what.

(relieved) Ah, okay.

Bushra started chuckling as a response much to G's annoyance. Afterwards, Sarpo looked at Cloe and then looked at the other MPC2 members.

Thanks everyone for coming here!
I'm so thankful that the people I call "family" are here for us two.
So really, thank you. All of you.

It was my pleasure.

Same here.
Just be careful there, okay Sarpo?

* chuckles *
Thank you for your concern, Bushra. Really.
With Cloe by my side, I assure you that we will be alright.

Aww...
* pinches Sarpo's cheeks *
You are gonna make me blush, hon!

* starts blushing instead *
(embarrassed) Dang it Cloe, look at what you have done!

Everyone started laughing while Emily was still upset.

As for you, kiddo...
* points at Artender and PotaTeo *
Take care of them for me, okay?

I will!
Thank you Mr. Sarpo!

No problem.
* looks at the person next to her *
As for you, G…

* trying to not tear up *
Umm... yeah?

We will have lots of fun when we are back, okay?

Su- sure dude!

* looks at their roadster *
Welp, guess we will be on our way then.
See you later folks!
And remember-

Take care!

* smiles *

Since when did you start finishing my sentences?

* holds his hand *
Just now.

The five of them waved back at Sarpo and Cloe while the two drove away... until the group could no longer see them.

Pack it up folks, we are done here.
* realizes that PotaTeo was still hugging him *
Aww, come here Teo!
Don't be upset!

Yeah, brother Teo!
They are going to be back soon!

Until then, we can just have our own fun!
Right, kids?

Yeah!
* hugs Artender *
Thank you for looking out for me, Uncle Tender!

He he…
* suddenly remembers something *
OH, OH! G, I ALMOST FORGOT!

Huh?
What is it?

Um… Emily, can you go back to our home with your brother?

Oh? Why is that, Uncle Tender?

It’s grown up stuff.

Oooh, okay!
* picks up PotaTeo *
Alright, brother Teo!
Let’s go home!

Artender waved them goodbye and looked at the, now confused, Team Bushra.

G, Hood said she wanted to talk with you.

Excuse you?

Yeah. When we went to check on her, she said she wanted to speak with you.

No way!
Not in a million years, dude!
Did she think we already forgot about the mess she created?!

Yeah. When we went to check on her, she said she wanted to speak with you.

You can tell her “no”.

You see… I would but no one is monitoring her for the night since I’m busy with the kids so… I kinda told her “yes”.

(sigh) Unbelievable.

(Does that mean I can borrow your bed for the night or…)

A few hours later; G was monitoring Hood’s cell while sitting inside Sarpo’s office. He thought this feature was real handy. But shortly after, it seemed that Hood realized G was the one monitoring her. She called him to her office cell which G still refused to do so. He used the camera to express his opinion by making it look like the camera was shaking its head. Then Hood started smiling like she was about to something mischievous. G tried to ignore her attitude but he was still worried if she would do something drastic again on his watch. So he grabbed the key and went to talk with Hood herself.

Oh, there you are pumpkin.

…

Tsch, what’s wrong?
Cat got your tongue?
Oh wait, the cat left the city instead!

Why are you doing this Hood?
I am really not in the mood for this right now!

Why so?
Don't you have everything you could have ever wanted?
Let's see here...
* starts counting with her fingers *
You got me in jail for one AND got rid of my master... AGAIN.
So really, why are you like this, pumpkin?

…why should I tell you?

Because you see... I, Hood Riley, empathize with you greatly.

How so?

I have seen Sarpo develop into the person he is now, I can help you even when I'm trapped here.
* reaches out her hand *
So please, accept my offering.

That doesn’t sound too convincing.
In fact, I’m sure Sarpo despises you.

He he… very well.

I know you are playing dumb with me, Hood.
Bushra told me all about how you tried to convert him into a hoodster.
And looking at your track record... yeah, I will pass on this offer of yours.

* starts doing her nails *
Whatever fits your bill, pumpkin.

(sigh) You are so tiring, Hood.

That's what I am good at, pumpkin.

I wonder how Ms. Meow deals with your shenanigans...

By **actually** listening to me, of course!

Peh… is that so…
Fine, lay it on me then.

Have you seen weird flashes of an alternate past too?

G was shook by this. Could it be…

Y-yes?!
How do you know about that?!
Did you touch the text too?!

Patience, pumpkin.
Simmer down.

O-okay.

There, silence.
* coughs *
You see, the thing is… I don't remember anything from those memories despite remembering I saw them.

How is that possible?

Dunno, beats me.

Huh.
* smiles *
Well, unlike YOU, I remember those memories very clearly.
* snaps his fingers to remember *
Like the time we… we…

* chuckles *
You were saying?

W-why can't I remember?!
* looks at Hood *
Stop being so cryptic and ANSWER ME!

Make me.

FINE!
* his eyes turn red *
I WILL!

G? What are you doing?

"G" looks behind him and sees Bushra looking at him all worried.
His eyes turned back to normal.

B- Bushra? What are you doing here?

I couldn't sleep so I wanted to check up on you!
And… you don't seem too alright.

I'm… sorry.
I didn't know what came over me.

Tell you what, let me take over for the night.
You don't seem to be in the right mindset to be doing this.

(sigh) Yeah, yeah…
* looks at Hood *
I'm not done with you yet, Hood.

* smiles *

I know, pumpkin.
Rest well and, of course…

“Thanks for playing.”

G was still furious about what Hood said to him. She HAS to know something he doesn't, he thought. He was left with so many more questions than answers. He wasn't even paying attention to the road. While he was walking back home, a car was coming straight towards him. He realized this at the last second and tried to save himself by jumping towards the forest located underneath him. He used his hammer powers to slow his momentum down but it wasn't enough. He hurt his shoulder in the process.

GAH! Why does this keep happening to me?!

G checks his pockets and realizes that he didn't bring his phone with him.

(sarcasm) Of course I forgot my phone at home, DUH!
* holds his head *
This day can't get any worse...

G walked inside the forest to rest his shoulder for the night. He knew that the Travelers that stayed in Diamond City could help him heal up his shoulder when he got back. For now, his priority was finding somewhere safe. He sits under a very tall tree and covered his shoulder with leaves. “At least I learned something from Bushra!”, he thought to himself. But before he could rest, he saw a figure walking in the shadows. He summons his hammer and waits for the figure to show their face. But who he saw was someone he never expected to see again.

A-ARRAY?!

6 years ago on an unknown island, a kid with purple clothing was playing with a football he recently found. He has been living here for many years, without any human interaction. Because for all he knew, the whole island was deserted and no one lived here. Besides himself, of course. One day however, he saw a small boat approaching his island. He was skeptical but also terrified. The boy in the boat started walking towards him.

* grabs a stick *
Who… who are you?

Oh, hello there!
Greetings! I am Array Thunder!

My name is... G Doodle.

Oooh... sweet! Nice to meet you, G-
Hold on a second!
* looks around the island *
It seems like you were stranded on this small island for a long time...
what is it’s name anyways?
* looks around a bit more and sees a sign *
"The Legendary Turtle Island", huh?

* blushes *
It sounded catchy in my head, okay?!

Hehe alright, G!
Say, where are the others? I want to meet them too!

Well… I’m the only one here.
I have been staying here for as long as I can remember.

Hm… I can surely relate.

About what?

About the “being alone” one.
I never had a family growing up…

Daw…
Well… look at it on the bright side!
Now we can adventure… together!

Hehe, yea… thanks G.

No problem, Array!

The two started collecting materials around the island before they left there for good. Even though G was going to miss this place, the thought of exploring new places with a new possible best friend was just too good of an opportunity to pass up.

Ay, ay, capt’n!
Are we ready to sail or not?

Oh we are ready, alright!
We are gonna explore all over Perdiah… with Jeremy!

Jeremy?
Who’s Jeremy?

* points at the boat *
My precious boat.

Oooh, sweet!
Hey Array! Can I try to drive the boat?

Oh, of course!
Go for it!

YAY!
* starts up the boat at low speed *
Woah, this thing's pretty tricky to control!
* looks at Array *
Want to get out of this place, new friend?

* smiles *
Have I ever said "no" to you before?
Of course, I want to!
Start the machine, you "slow poke"!

HAH!
* changes the speed to the maximum speed *
You asked for it!

And thus, their adventure began. The two continued sailing the boat until G started becoming seasick. Array took control of the boat and safely brought it closer to the nearby land. Array waited until G stopped puking. Afterwards, the two went for a scroll in the woods.

Agh, I hate forests...

Why so?
I think they are pretty cool.

Meh, I just don't like the environment.

Oh, that's the reason?

Yep. And what's your stance on tree culture, "Mr. T"?

I like forests.
I dunno, there's just something comforting about it.
I always wanted to build a treehouse.

Uh huh...
* spits out the vines *
PEH, stupid vines!

* laughs *
Be careful, dude!

I'm trying, alright?!
* notices something *
Wait, hold on... Yo G, you seeing what I am seeing?

* looks ahead *
Wait, is that-

A VILLAGE?!

The two ran towards the village and were then greeted by the kind villagers.

Greetings, folks!
Welcome to Village Low!
How can I be of service to you?

N-no, we just came here to rela-

Actually you CAN!
Are you the chief of this village by any chance?

Ho ho! I sure am!
Do you two want to eat something?
You seem pretty hungry.
The villagers will be more than happy to help you out!

You got yourself a deal, old man!
* both shake hands *
Say, when can we expect the goods to be ready?

In about an hour, most likely.

Sweet! Alright then!
Thanks a lot, Mister…?

Carlos.
You can call me Mr. Carlos.

Awesome!
Hey, G! Want to play games to pass the time?

Like what?

Hm... maybe hide and seek?

Don't only kids play that?

Come on... we aren't THAT old!

Heh... you got me there.

Alright. You hide while I seek!

Okay!

G ran towards the forest. He thought of hiding behind one of the trees... "too obvious" he later thought. He then thought of hiding in the bushes, also pretty obvious. Before he could decide on one of the two options, he bumps into a building of sorts. He got up and looked at the supposed building only to realize that it was an ancient temple. G slowly walked towards it. He was fascinated by how it looked. Then suddenly, a beam of light appeared on top of the temple which rose up to the sky. G was so amazed by this that he forgot he was

even playing hide and seek with his friend.

AHA! I gotcha!

Aw man... I forgot I was supposed to hide.

* chuckles *
And you call this a "kids" game!

He he… I was just distracted by this cool looking temple.

Uh huh... Gotta admit, it IS a cool looking temple.

Yup! I love how bright it is!

…bright?

Wait, what?
* looks back at the temple *
It stopped glowing?

It glowed to begin with?
Perhaps it was just your imagination?

I guess…
* looks at Array *
So, what now?

Do we continue playing hide and seek?

Nah, you already showed me that you can't play that game well at all.

You aren't gonna live that down, are you?

Yep.

Array suddenly gets an idea and changes his voice to something similar to an old grandpa's voice.

"Oh goodness!"

Hm?

"This little dude doesn't know how to play hide and seek!"
* grabs a stick from the ground *
"I sure hope he won't be able to dodge my ruler!"

Ohhhh... I get it!
Ehem, "Oh gee, I better run away from here. I don't want this bad man to hurt me!"

G runs away from Array while both of them start laughing like dumb idiots... which they were. The two had the time of their lives. The two were running in circles around the temple until...

"Get ready to be blasted, turtle man-"
* bumps into someone *

OW!

Hey, why did you stop-
Oh.

Oh, hey! You two found Temple Tutsu!
It's one of our most fascinating relics from our past!

Oooh, what are its origins?

While nothing too concreate has been documented about the temple itself, we know that it’s a bygone relic from “The Species War”!
It's said that our temple shines brighter than the sun every thousand years. Sadly, we haven't seen it shine like that... yet.

Huh…

Can we enter it?!
Pleaseeeeee!

Unfortunately no.
The doors seem to be jammed, brute force doesn't work either.
My people tried to enter the temple for years only for it to result in failure each time.

Aw man...

But yeah, I have come here to let you know that dinner is ready-

YAY!

Woah, slow down kids!

DIBS ON THE CHICKEN!

OH NO, YOU DON’T!

The two ran towards the chief’s house and started eating their food. Both of them didn't realize how hungry they were before eating. After they were done, the two went solo and explored the town. G saw so many awesome things on his path. So many cool buildings, fountains and even little farm areas. After the two were done with their solo trips, the chief offered them a free place that they could stay in for the time being, which Array refused.

Are you sure, my boy?
Things could be dangerous out there in the middle of the night!

Definitely, sir Carlos!
You don't need to worry about us!
But either way, thank you so much for your kindness! Right, G?

Yep!
Thank you so much, sir!

It was my pleasure.
Good luck on trip, boys!

The two then waved goodbye at Mr. Carlos and left the village. After walking for a bit, G noticed the giant sack Array was carrying on his back.

Woah, where did you get that?

Oh, this?
Mr. Carlos gave me this to help out on our trip!

Well, that’s odd.
I don’t remember him mentioning that.

Perhaps he forgot to tell you.
* a raindrop hits his head *
Uhh, nevermind that I guess.
It looks like we are gonna have to build a small hut to rest in.
If only we knew someone who could build such a thing in a short amount of time...

That's my cue!

G starts building the hut while Array was collecting materials. They were able to create a new hut in less than an hour, a new record for them. They considered themselves pretty lucky seeing as the rainy weather turned into a dry thunderstorm shortly after.

Woah, we finished this thing up just in time!

You said it, G!
* yawns *
Man, am I tired or what?

Hah!
* also yawns *
Me too dude, me too.

Night night G!

You too dude.

Oh yeah, just one more thing to mention!
We are gonna have to travel faster tomorrow, by the way.

Oh? Why so?

For the first time ever, G noticed Array with a confused face. He seemed… conflicted with himself.

Oh, you know... bad weather and stuff?
Yeah, that’s the reason.

I guess that makes sense…

After a few minutes, both of them slept. Goes to show how tired they really were, huh? Up until they heard...

AFTER THEM!

THEY CAN’T BE TOO FAR AWAY!

(half awake) Ugh... where did that noise come from?
Array? What's going on, dude?

G thought that it was the weather at first. He could hear the sounds of thunder after all... But then he looks around and finds no trace of Array anywhere. He must have... no. G didn't want to think about that possibility. He exits the hut and sees Array burying the sack to the ground. He was so confused about all of this.

A-Array? What are you doing here?

G?!
* tries to calm down *
Look G... this isn't what it looks like! I'm just trying to-

The two could hear Mr. Carlos' shouting from a distance.

I- I don't understand-

Before he could even finish his sentence, they heard sounds of a landslide happening. And the worst part? It was approaching them... FAST! G tried to warn Array to move out but it was too late. Array was left buried under the rubble. G tried to open a path for Array to escape with his bare hands but it wasn't working. He shouted out his name multiple times but there was no response. He started crying next to the rubble. He then heard Mr. Carlos' shouting closer than ever. He needed to save Array... but he didn't want to be caught either. G ran towards the forest with tears in his eyes, never to be seen again.

Back to present time;

I-I cannot believe it...
* tears up *
ARRAY! IT'S ME, G!

I-
* also starts tearing up *
G!

Array ran towards him and hugged G as he hugged him back. They thought the other one was dead for so long that it was an earth shattering revelation for both of them.

I- I thought you were... I can't believe you are ACTUALLY here!

I hate to admit it, G, but... I thought the same.
I couldn't find any trace of you after that night...
* wipes his tears *
But never mind that. Look at you, G!
You look awesome! The green looks GREAT on you!

Th-thank you, dude! You look... exactly the same though.

* smirks *
What did you expect, me getting a new haircut?

* laughs *
Glad that you are just like how I remember you, Array!
* sees the blue gauntlet stuck to Array's right hand *
Uh, what's that?

Oh, this thing?
My right hand was hurt badly after the landslide so... the villagers helped me out and replaced my right hand with this!
Pretty cool, right?

Yep! That looks so cool!

Yup!
* looks around *
Don't tell me you live inside a forest, G!
You know how I hate them!

I mean I used to but not anymore... Wait... OH MY GOSH!

What’s wrong?

I totally forgot about my friends!
Oh geez... Bushra is going to be so worried...

“Bushra”?

Oh, right! I will introduce you to my friends in Diamond City!

Oh, you live in Diamond City?
The one MPC is now located in?

Yep! In fact, I am an MPC member myself!

Really?!

Yup! I can't wait to introduce you to them!
* holds his hand *
Gosh, I can't believe you are actually here now!

* smiles *
I can't believe it either!
So.. lead the way then "slow poke"!

Alright! OW!
* holds his shoulder *
Maybe after visiting a nearby hospital...

Works for me!
Glad to have you back, G!

And thus, the childhood friends were reunited. Who knows what MPC2's reactions to this stranger will look like...

CHAPTER 20: AN AWKWARD RIDE

It has been hours since they heard a word from G. Bushra was frustrated beyond belief, he specifically told G to relax for the night but alas, G didn't listen… or he was captured by something. He lets Artender know that they should look for G tomorrow morning which Artender agrees on. Bushra then ends the call and goes to his bunk bed. It was... strange going to sleep without the two insulting each other. Bushra looked at the window one last time and went to sleep in worry.

Meanwhile in the MPC 2 headquarters, Artender went to check up on Hood after his coffee break. He types in the password and enters the secret room. He then sees Hood... reading a book?

Morning, pumpkin. How is it going?
* realizes that he was packing his stuff up *
Well, ain't that rude to ignore someone?
I thought you guys were the "heroes"…

What I am doing doesn't concern you one bit, Hood.

You seem deep in your thoughts.
Care to explain to the class?

If it will make you shut up… fine.
G went… missing yesterday.

Oh, really now?

Yea… He hasn’t answered to any of our calls for the past few hours.

Fascinating…
* chuckles *
Perhaps he is still upset over our time together.

Oh and I assume you are REALLY proud of that, aren't you?

Sure am.

Whatever Hood, I don’t have time to deal with your shenanigans today.

* smiles *
Oh yes, surely spending time with your dumb kids is far more important.

Don't you DARE talk about them like that!

I can and I will.
* yawns *
Oh well, tell him I said "hi" if you can find him.

…goodbye, Hood.

Goodbye, pumpkin!

See you later…

Artender closed the door and looked at the cell in disgust. He was mad about what Hood just said to him. She could insult him all she wanted but he drew the line at his kids. At the same time, he was still thinking about G's whereabouts. He couldn't be too far away. He decided to think about it after Bushra arrived. He goes upstairs and sees his kids eating their breakfast. After seeing his kids all happy and well, all of his problems went away.

Sorry for waking you up early again, sweetie.
I didn't want to leave you two home alone.

It's okay, Uncle Tender!
Where have you been?

It's... a long story.
I will tell you some other time.

Okay!
* takes a bite out of her pastry *
This is very tasty Uncle- ACHOO!

Oh jeez.
Are you okay, sweetheart? Are you sick?

I don't know... Am I sick, Robert?
* looks at the plushie *
I knew it!

What did he say?

He said I might be- I might be- ACHOO! ...sick.

Aww...
* hugs her to keep her warm *
It's gonna be alright Emily, let me get a blanket for you!

Thank you, Uncle Tender!

No problem, sweetie.
Speaking of which, where's your baby brother?
I told you to wake him up back at the shack.

I did, Uncle Tender!
* zips Robert open and pulls out PotaTeo *
He was in here this whole time!

* picks PotaTeo up *
Morning Teo! How is my little boy?

PotaTeo does a yawning expression with his hands. Artender puts him right next to Emily.

You two are so adorable!
* hands over the blanket to his kids *
Here you go, kids. Get comfy!

YAY!!!

PotaTeo gives Artender a thumbs up as the two get under the blanket. Suddenly however, Artender heard knocking sounds

coming from the door.

I will be right back, you two!
Gotta check the door!

Okay!

Artender opens the door, expecting Bushra, only to see two people standing in front of the door.

Hello Artender-

G?! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?!

Woah, woah! Calm down folks!

And who are YOU supposed to be?!
* looks at G *
You made us all worried sick!

...yeah sorry. That was on me.
Bushra wasn't angry... right?

He was furious, alright!
You should definitely call him or something before he-

G?!

BUSHRA?!

ROBERT?!

Where were you last night?!

Look dude, I am sorry! I-I was just-

Folks.
* raises both of his hands *
Let's be rational for a second.
Let's talk one by one without making this more problematic than it has to be-

I’m sorry, who are you again?

Ehem.
As I was saying, one at a time please.

So... I was on my way home after Bushra told me to when suddenly, I fell down and hurt my shoulder.
I was on my way home until I saw my childhood friend, Array-

That’s me! Array Thunder!

Yep. And then he helped me get here.

Why did it take you so long then?

Dude, the road was longer than we anticipated.
It might have taken another day if Array didn't help me out.

Bushra still wasn't convinced and looked at Array with a disgusted face.

Hm... what an interesting figure you turned out to be, "Array".

What is that even supposed to mean?!

Alright, ENOUGH!
There's children watching!
If you two are gonna continue rambling, go somewhere else!

Grr…. yeah, you are right.

I guess I could have made a better first impression…

Sorry for changing the topic Artender but...
* points at his shoulder *
Please?

Oh. Uh... of course man!
Follow me!

Thanks, dude.

As for you two… behave yourselves.

As the two left to get medical supplies from the operating room, Array and Bushra were looking each other dead in the eye. Both of them were suspicious of the other one. Array thought "Why is G hanging around with a jerk like him?" while Bushra was thinking "Man, why did G bring this hobo here?" Their thoughts were interrupted when the kids started watching TV.

* takes a deep breath *
Look. I know my appearance was... quite sudden to say the least but I have been looking for G for the past 6 years.
I am a friend of his too!
* reaches out his hand *
Again, I'm sorry if this is all sudden but I would like to have a fresh start with all of you.

Uh huh...

Aw, come on man!
What would convince you that I mean no harm?!

Listen "Array".
I would gladly believe you but G never mentioned you to me even once before.
How am I supposed to know that you didn't brainwash him or

something cliche like that?

...you know what, that's perfectly justified.

Wait, are you... agreeing with me?

Yup. You got me there, fair and square.
I would just like to say one final thing... At the very least I think we shouldn't argue with each other while G is with us, you know?
I don't want to make him feel upset.

Hm... a decent offer, I would say.
* also raises out his hand for a handshake *
I say we have a deal, Array.

Thank you so much... gosh dang it, I always hate this part!

Hm?

* chuckles nervously *
Asking people what their names are isn't really my specialty.

Bushra. It's Bushra Stoked.

Lovely.
Now that we are all caught up… do you guys have anything to drink or-

* holds his right hand in pain *
ARGH...

Oh, are... you okay?
And what's that on your hand?

* still holding his hand *
Yes, I'm... good. It's just... a cool looking gauntlet, yeah! Definitely!

Are you okay, mister?

Yes, I'm fine.
Thank you, little girl.

He he, no problem mister!
You look like my uncle!

I… do?

Yeah, since you both have blonde hair and what not.
Cut the kid some slack.

No, no. I wasn't trying to insult the kid, mate.
I was just confused, that's all!

The four of them then heard sounds of footsteps. It was Artender and G.

You should be all good to go now, G!
Does it still hurt?

A tiny bit but thanks, dude!

No problem.

Oh, hello G!
Glad you are back!

Me too!
* pokes Bushra's shoulder *
And you, Bushra?

(sigh) I am also glad you are okay.

Did you two start getting used to each other?

(sarcasm) Oh yeah, totally.

I know when you aren’t honest with me, dude.

Bushra just shrugs it off. Then G looks around for Array and sees him playing a fighting game with PotaTeo while Emily commentated.

And you?

Oh yeah, he’s cool.
Though I don’t think he likes me all that much.
Nevermind that though, do you guys want to join the game as well?!
* whispers *
Don't go against Teo though, that potato is cracked!

Hm... maybe I could try it out.

That's the spirit!

Artender enters the room with a poster on his hands, looking all happy.

Or… we could go to an amusement park!

Hm?

I just got the news from our mailman.
It says here that every entry is free today!

Can we go to the ballerina one, Uncle Tender?
I saw it once while we were walking in the city!

We sure could, sweetheart.

* looks at the crowd *
So what do you say folks?
Are we all in this?!

YEAH!

THEN LET'S DO IT TO IT!

A few hours later, inside the amusement park;

Woah, look at the size of that thing!
Like, GOSH DANG! That thing is massive!

Buddy, those are kids attractions.

Ah, my mistake.

Ehem. Moving on from that, we are here now!

Yay! Can we go to the ballerina one now, pleasee?

We sure can, Emily.

Yo, mate! Perhaps we should split up.
So, you can take care of your kids and all that jazz.

That's a pretty solid idea actually, Array!

No problemo, "Uncle Tender"

Stop that.

So, it's decided then?

Yep, you three can do whatever you want for the time being.

You know you can let loose for the day too, right?

Hm... you are right actually.
I haven't done that in such a long time.
Let's meet up here in... 3 hours? Does that sound good?

Yeah.

Alright then, see you guys later!

Bye bye!

The three waved at the Tender Family and went on their merry way.

So, what do we do now?

Hm...
* looks around and points at one of the attractions *
Can we get on that one?

* chuckles *
Is it because it's fish themed?

Peh, no! It just... looks cool, okay?!

You know what, G?
I think Bushra is onto something here.

He is?

I am?!

Yup, it seems like a pretty fun ride.
I mean, do you have any other recommendations, G?

Hm... Maybe that roller coaster?

Nah, that one looks kinda lame.

Aw man…

Hey, cheer up!
Maybe we could go there after we are done with this one, what do you say?

I would appreciate that…

* sees the line getting crowded *
Oh crap, we should get a move on, guys!
Let's get in the line quickly!

After waiting for a few minutes, they get on the ride and wait for it to start. Array and G sat next to each other while Bushra sat in front of them. Array moved closer to G and held his hand.

(confused) Oh man, are you excited or what?

Oh yeah, he he!

While I don’t mind it, why are you holding my hand?

Oh, that’s… my hand was just a bit… cold.
Yeah, that’s it.

Oh alright!
That’s fine then.

What are you two babbling about?

Oh, nothing too important.
I'm just so excited for the ride to start!
How about you guys?

I guess I am too?

I was BORN ready!

Oh crap, its moving! Hold onto something, you guys!
This is gonna be a "bumpy ride"!

(slightly annoyed) I hope you are not proud of that joke.

You bet I am!

Meanwhile, Artender was watching his kids have the time of their lives. After the ballerina attraction, the Tender family decided to go bumper carting. While the kids were having their first round, Artender was thinking of something in the meantime. What G said has resonated with him... " let loose" he said. But how…

UNCLE TENDER, UNCLE TENDER!

Oh, what is it kiddo?

* holding a very happy PotaTeo in her hands *
This was so fun, Uncle Tender!
Can we do it again?

Yeah sure. But first… can I also join in?

Of course, we have an extra seat right here!

Sweet!

YAY!
This is gonna be so much fun!

The entire family entered the next round. After a few minutes went by, the cars started to work. It was time. Emily and Teo were holding on to their seats to not lose their balances. It was actual chaos. Artender was bumping into everyone on the arena while dodging every hit at the same time. The kids realized that their dad was really good at this and started cheering him on. And after another few minutes passes, the cars stopped moving. Artender asserted his dominance to everyone watching. Emily thought her uncle was the coolest person ever because of his driving skills. After the game ended, Emily held Artender's arm and asked;

That was so cool!
How are you so well at bumper carts, Uncle Tender?

Well, Emily...
Let's just say... I'm great at driving caravans.

He he, I don’t know what that means but I love it!

You are too kind for your own good, Emily.

Yip!

Well, what do you want to do now?

Hm… not really.
I want to talk to meet up with Mr. Thunder and friends!

Huh, really now?

Yup!

What does your brother think?

Emily looks at PotaTeo and he gives her a thumbs up.

He also wants to!

…alright then.
You two really like him, huh?

Yep! He’s such a kind person!

Hm… I see...

Suddenly, Artender notices Team Bushra and Array walking towards them.

Speaking of which…
Yo G, what gives?

Oh? Nothing.
We just got out of our ride and wanted to pay you guys a visit.

Yeah plus this place became boring real quick.
It wasn't even like how it was advertised!
For goodness sake, where WAS the aquarium?!

Honestly I liked it for what it was but that's just my opinion.

Also what were you guys up to?
We couldn't see you from all the way up there.

Little brother and I got on a bunch of rides and then rode bumper cars with Uncle Tender!

Aww... That's sweet.
I’m glad you took my advice on that, Artender.

Yeah, all thanks to you!
I really needed that.

* looks at everyone *
Well, I hope everyone enjoyed their time here regardless of their overall thoughts.

We sure did.
Thank you, "Uncle Tender"

You should stop that.

Nah, I don’t think I will.

I'm starting to really like you, Array.

The pleasure is all mine.

Artender looks at his phone to check the time.

Shoot, it's getting late.
We gotta go back home, children.

Okay, Uncle Tender!

Yeah, we should probably go back as well...
* looks at Array *
Yo Array, want to check out our house?
It has a very cool bunk bed and...
* realizes that Array wasn’t looking at him and was weirdly silent *
Uhm... Array? Are you okay, dude?

Yeah buddy, I was just joking before.
You are not seriously hurt, are you?

Then suddenly, Array drops to the ground unconscious. Everyone started to panic afterwards. G and Bushra were trying to wake him up while Artender was calling an ambulance. G still couldn't process what was happening around him. All he could remember was Emily crying and seeing the gauntlet on Array's hand glow bright.

Several hours have passed since then. Team Bushra and Artender were waiting for the final results. G didn't realize how severe Array's condition was. He thought it was just some sort of advanced bandage for his wounds but... not this. They heard sounds of a door creaking and they all stood up.

Is he alright, doctor?!

(sigh) Please sit down, young man.
Don't worry, he is doing just fine right now.

What's his condition?

It's about the gauntlet on his hand.
It's spreading radiation to his body.

Wait what?!

Woah, calm down buddy.
What do you mean, doc?

It's true.
It's actually marvelous how he survived for this long with that thing stuck to his hand.

Huh... were you able to get rid of the gauntlet?

Unfortunately, no.
That thing is really resilient, it acts like it's a part of his body so we decided to not risk the well being of his hand.
Sorry.

Oh dear…

Can- can I talk to him?

You sure can.
He is in the other room.

Thank you so much... for everything, sir.

It was my pleasure.

The MPC 2 members left the waiting room and entered Array's patient room. He was lying in his bed, in silence.

Array?

Yeah, mate? Is there something wrong?

Dude, you made us all worried sick!
Are you alright?

Yeah, I am all fine and dandy.
Sorry for ruining our night though-
* coughs *
Ugh...

No need to apologize, man.

Oh, heya Artender!
* looks around *
Where are the kids?

I sadly had to leave them at the shack.
It was getting late.

I understand.
Can you tell those two that I'm doing fine-
* coughs again *
Ugh... okay I take it back, I don’t feel really good actually.

I hope you will get better soon, buddy.

Hey, don't be upset Bushra!
At least now, you can take care of G for me-

NO!

Pardon?

DON'T ACT LIKE YOU ARE ABOUT TO DIE! STOP IT!

I- What?

There's gotta be a way to heal you up, don't give up!

Uh... okay?
Overreacting much?

Alright people, brainstorming time!
* points at Team Bushra *
Do you two have any ideas?

I… can’t think of anything.

Me neither…

* takes a deep breath *
We are so sorry, Array. I hope we can-
* his phone starts to vibrate *
Shoot, someone is calling me! Be right back, you guys!

The three watch as Artender leaves the room.

Welp, guess this is it.

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT!

Look, I can't bear seeing you guys upset like this.
So I'm just gonna tell you my idea right away.
Sounds good?

Alright then…

Okay then.
G, remember Temple Tutsu?

Uh... yeah?

You see, I have been researching them ever since we split up and as it turns out, there was a lot more to it than the old man led on.

Oh?

Turns out, Temple Tutsu was the main power source for the other 7 temples across Perdiah.
Legends say that if you beat the temple's challenge without fail, you get a reward from it.

Then what are we waiting for?!
Let's go and do that stupid challenge!

Well, you see... Temple Tutsu needs to be powered up in order for others to function...
* coughs *
(sigh) Look man. I had a good run, okay?
And reuniting with you after so long has made me feel… complete again.

Umm, remember when I told you I saw Temple Tutsu glow all those years ago?

I-
* stands up and holds G's jacket *
OH MY GOODNESS, G!
I WAS LITERALLY SAYING MY LAST WORDS YOU DUMB LOVABLE GOOF!

Woah, woah!
Calm down, Array!

Sorry for overreacting but WOW, G!
I... should have believed you that day...

It's... it's alright man.
It happens.

Welp.

* tries to get up *
Guess I'm on my way there then!

Oh no, you DON’T!
What do you think you are doing?!

Going to the temple, genius!

Not so fast, little buddy.

I have already made up my mind, Bushra.
Don't try to stop me.

But Array, we just got you back... and I can’t… I can’t lose you again.

Array starts blushing but pulls his hat down to cover his face.

Ehem. I… appreciate that.
I just think you two might just slow me down, like what can you guys even do anyway?

G then summons his hammer on the spot which terrifies Array.

Since when could you- how- WHAT?!

It’s… a long story.
But we are more than capable to support you!
PLEASE let us come with you!

…fine.
Just for you.

Alright then, "Mr. Thunder"
Where to now?

Array picks up his backpack and pulls out a map from inside it.

The closest temple from here is... Temple Skulled.

Huh... never heard of that place.
Also wait, why didn't you double check if you had the map already?

Dude, come on.
I tried to do everything I could to enter one of those temples on my own but it didn't work.
Not to mention that Carlos and his folks couldn't enter their temple too, remember?

…right.

I feel like I need some context here, G.

I will explain it on the way, dude.

Now that it is settled... We are on, mates!
Do you guys have any vehicles we could use by any chance?

We do actually!
I think Artender has it though... Wait a second... Where is he anyways?

Meanwhile, Artender was still talking on the phone;

Uh huh, okay. So happy that you are okay, sweetie.
Be sure to take your cough drops before going to bed, okay?
Oh and also take care of your little brother for me.
Good night sweetie, love you! Bye bye!
* ends the call *
Man, I hope Array is okay...

Artender gets confused after seeing Array leave the patient room without Team Bushra.

Array?! What are you doing here?
Are you alright?

I'm feeling better now.
…
Okay I'm gonna rip the bandage off right away, we need to borrow your car for something.

Well, THAT came out of nowhere!
For what exactly?

We are in the search for these ancient temples right here, we believe that one of these bad boys can help me get rid of this gauntlet.
So please "Uncle Tender"-

Will you stop saying that if I give you the keys?

...maybe?

Good enough.
* throws the keys at Array *
Don't damage it though or I will make YOU pay for it.

I can't guarantee that but sure.

Hmpf... Do you even know how to drive?

...yesn't?

Yeah, I figured as much.

Wait... you guys can come with us too!
We might need some additional help there!

Yeah, sorry no. Someone has to take care of MPC 2 here.
It sucks but what can you do, right?

Yup. See you later then, Artender!
It was a pleasure to meet you.
I hope we can get back from this quest safe and sound.

I certainly hope so too.
Tell those two punks “goodbye” from me!

Will do!
See ya!

And thus, the trio were now on a new quest. Who knew what challenge awaited them on the other side!

CHAPTER 21: BATTLE AGAINST A MUTANT

It was a rather nice day on Perdiah. After what happened last night, Artender was noticeably tired. These last few hours have been exhausting for him. So much paperwork... so many phone calls... he remembered one of those calls which devastated him at the time. The region’s guards residing on the Northern Coast told him about an incident which occurred last night. A continent was separated because of an earthquake. Artender tried to send supplies to that area but today, he learned of the outcome. They couldn't save them. By the time the supplies arrived, it was already too late. The officers could only watch as the continent drifted away from the coast. Artender felt that MPC 2, as it stood, just wasn't enough. He felt like they needed more support than just relying on the region’s guards. Something HAD TO change... He wanted to let Sarpo know how dire the situation at hand was when he came back from his vacation. He decided to focus on his work to get his mind off things.

Then, Artender saw the drawing Emily drew for him. It was a crude drawing of him, Emily and PotaTeo hugging each other. He smiled as he shed a tear. He was so happy that Emily was now a part of their family. She was such an amazing sister for his little boy, PotaTeo. As much as he appreciated Emily, he wished he could spend more with her on a personal level. PotaTeo wasn't his biological son but at least he knew of his origins. Emily on the other hand? Not even a single clue. He was worried about that too. What would her reaction be if he asked Emily about her past life? He decided to ignore these thoughts for the time being. He checked the clock on the wall. His shift was nearly finished. He picked up the "surprise" he got for his kids and put them in his pocket. He wanted to give these to them at the perfect moment. He looked at the table one last time before exiting Sarpo's office. And there she was, patiently waiting for him. She was eating cookies with milk though Artender realized that she was upset about something. Only one way to find out, he thought.

Uncle Tender!
You are back!

He he… sure am, Emily!

Uhm... Can I ask something, Uncle Tender?

Sure Emily.
What is it?

I can't find Brother Teo anywhere. I... I'm worried...

* chuckles *
Calm down, Emily.
He is probably playing a game with you.

Huh? What do you mean?

Teo LOVES playing hide and seek.
That little trouble maker!

So I'm the seeker and... OOH!
Okay, I get it now!

Let's look for him together, okay Emily?

Okay!

Hm... let's see... Perhaps he is hiding under that table?

Let me check, Uncle Tender!
Hm... Nope, not here!

Alright then… let’s look for him somewhere else.
(Where could that little bastard be... Perhaps he might be in the canteen.)
Alright Emily, let’s check the canteen.

Sure-
ACHOO!

Bless you, sweetheart.

* sniffs *
Thank you, Uncle Tender.

Emily and Artender started exploring the MPC2 headquarters further. Artender tried to listen for any sort of creaking sounds but there was nothing. On the other hand, Emily was briefly looking inside each room they passed. She looked upset over it. After searching inside the canteen for 15 minutes, they decided to take a small break.

Emily?

Yeah, Uncle Tender?

What happened before Teo disappeared?

We were eating cookies together at first.
I went to the fridge to get milk but when I came back, I couldn't find him anywhere... and I got scared.

Ssh, it’s going to be all okay, sweetheart.
* pats her on the head *
I am sure he is in the building somewhere.

I just don't want Brother Teo to feel lost... like I once was...

Emily dear....
Please don’t feel that way.
* smiles *
Trust me, I know the feeling.

* sniffs *
You... do?

Yup.
I didn't do anything productive for so much of my life either.
That was the case... until we saved the world from an evil jerk.
Then I had PotaTeo to look after.
I felt like I finally had a purpose in life.
* points at Emily *
And now, you are a part of our family too!
Taking care of you two made me appreciate life so much, Emily.

I hope you know that.

I do! It's just... I remember being scared until Mr. Sarpo found me.
If it weren't for Mr. Sarpo, I wouldn't... I-

Emily starts crying and covers her eyes. Artender leans in for a hug.

Ssh... it's okay, Emily. It's all in the past now, you are safe with us.
I will not let anyone hurt you ever again..

Pro- promise?

Promise.

And then, out of nowhere, PotaTeo appears. It looks like he was hiding behind the dishwasher this whole time.

Brother Teo?!

You listened to the whole thing, didn’t you?

PotaTeo nods with tears in his eyes. He also got emotional after his dad's speech.

Heh... it’s alright, Teo.
We have been waiting for you.
Come on! Join me and your sister!

PotaTeo jumps towards Artender with joy. Artender picks him up mid air and hugs both of his kids.

I wouldn't trade anything in the world for this moment...

Thanks, Uncle Tender!
We love you so much! Robert does too!

* smiles *
I'm sure he does, sweetheart.

* picks up PotaTeo *
So... what were you up to, Brother Teo?

PotaTeo just shrugs. It wasn't anything particularly interesting it seems.

Hm... Oh well, I'm just glad you are safe.

PotaTeo just shrugs. It wasn't anything particularly interesting it seems.

Aw... you two are so adorable!
Actually hold on, I have been meaning to give you two something.

Oooh! What is it, Uncle Tender?

Artender reaches out to his pockets and pulls out a new set of crayons he got for his kids.

SURPRISE! Your uncle got new crayons for you two!

YAY!

Artender shares the crayons between two of his kids and sits back down.

Let's try something fun, kiddos.
How about...
* leans back to pull something *
...we draw together on this big white canvas!

This is gonna be so much fun!

* pats PotaTeo on the head *
It sure will be, little ones.

Hey, Uncle Tender!
Look what I just drew!

Oh, what is it?

Emily shows him drawings of two stick figures resembling G and Array respectively, holding hands.

It's Mr.Doodle and Mr. Thunder!
I miss them a lot...

Me too, sweetie…

"I wonder what they are up to now..."

* yawns *
Are we there yet?

Not yet, G!
We are not even halfway there!

Really now?
G, can you check the map?

Sure!
Mhm…

What is taking you so long?!

Oh, you know?
Maybe it might be because of the dang fog blocking my view!

Yeah Bushra, maybe don’t say stuff before thinking about it-

ALRIGHT.
That's enough of that, you two.

Sorry, sorry.

Yeah, probably shouldn't have gone too overboard with that one-

Hey! We aren't pointing any fingers here!
Right, Bushra?

Oh yeah, totally.
Scout's honor.

I can tell you aren’t taking me seriously, dude.

Whatever.

Erm... awkward....

…

…

I think we should change the topic.

Yeah, I second that.

Sureeeee.
So… Bushra?

Yeah?

Was the massive suitcase REALLY necessary?

Oh trust me, buddy.
It gonna be worth it, alright!

Okay then.

Well… now's my turn to ask questions!
Yo Array, I always wanted to ask... how do you know so much about these temples?

Aha, that's a good one!
Well, you see... I have always been fascinated by their sheer existence ever since we saw Temple Tutsu up close.
I am a bit of a Perdiah historian in a way.

That's actually really sick!
Can you tell us a bit more?

Oh trust me, buddy.

I mean... sure?
If that's what you want, I will be happy to share them with you guys.

Please do!

So apparently, these temples work in a pretty weird way.
When you reach them, they give you a challenge to overcome and when you beat them, it answers the winner's wishes.

Oooh... I'm a lot more interested in this temple business now!

Wait, so can someone just wish "I want to be a demi-god" and become one just like that?

Well, no. It's a lot more complex than that.
It only responds to " materialistic" wishes if that makes any sense.

I couldn't follow. What did you mean by that?

Like, you can wish something in the likes of "I want a river that can heal all of my wounds" but you can't wish stuff like "I want to control the minds of all Perdians with one snap of my fingers"

Darn.

Hm?

Oh, it was nothing.

I'm not gonna sugarcoat it, you are acting really weird, Bushra.

Yeah, mate! You can tell us what you were thinking!
We won't bite!

I was thinking of... restoring Town Mercia.

…oh.

Is that something really crucial or am I actively ruining the scene-
(Oh I definitely am, aren't I?)

Sorry Bushra, I just... didn't know.

It's fine.
Old habits die hard after all.

Uhm… is it my time to ask questions now?

* still looking at G *
…sure.

First of all... how do you summon that cool hammer, G?
It's so sick!

HAH! It's actually pretty simple, really.
I just focus on summoning my hammer and then it just appears out of thin air!

So cool!
How did you get those powers in the first place?

It's... a pretty long story. It all started with-

Hold that thought.
* stops the car and hops out of it *
Huh.

What is it, Array?

It looks like we are going to have to make a choice.
Which way should we pick, mates?

G and Bushra also hopped out of the car and saw Array pointing in two directions. One of those roads was filled to the brim with spikes.

G was starting to get worried. He knew this road from somewhere but he couldn't put his finger on it. But then, it all clicked. He saw the mountain right beside them. There it was, in all of its glory. The Mountain That Never Ends.

I dunno you guys, which way should we choose-

The spiky road please.

Uh, okay?
I'm assuming you guys know of this place, then?

Gosh, this place is the WORST!

What's so bad about it besides the name being a mouthful?

It… changes people.

In what way exactly?

I don't remember much of what happened here but Artender told me that this place made me and Bushra swap personalities!

Fascinating. I wonder what causes that to happen…

* points at the purple smoke covering the mountain *
I think that should answer your question.

Fair.
* tries to get back in the car *
Welp, I guess we are taking the riskier opti- ARGH!

ARRAY?!

* tries to get up *
I... I am fine.

Yeah, I don't think we should risk your well being.

I hate to be saying this but... you are right.
I'm not letting Array get worse by the minute!

Thank you…

I just.... Urgh...
Why do we ALWAYS end up on "The Mountain That Never Ends"?!

Dunno, beats me.

* looks at the mountain in dread *
Sigh, I guess we are taking that route.
Better prepare myself first before I start acting like a real jerk!

Actually... I have just the things that could make us immune to the mountain's effects!

Before they could respond, Array takes a peek inside his trustworthy bag and gives the two masks.

Oh sweet!

Okay, gotta admit that was pretty genius.
Where did you get them?

Uhh... I borrowed them from... Uncle Tender.
Totally.

Uh huh…

They wear their masks and Array goes back to the driver's seat, much to G's dismay.

Are you sure you want to continue driving, dude?
You could get hurt again!

I would think of alternatives but... I'm the only one who knows how to drive.
* looks back at them *
And I'm pretty sure you guys don't want to travel on foot, right?

Yeahhhhh, good point.
So what's the plan here, G?

Hm... since we are tackling The Mountain That Never... you know what, I will just call it "Mount Neverends"
I hate it and its stupid name.
Does that sound good?

Whatever fits your bill.

About that plan of yours, G?

Oh right.
We should do the same thing me and Bushra did over a year ago.

Which was?

Find the point in the mountain that makes us loop back and then you can land us safely to the other side of the mountain with your powers?
That's what I remember from that day.

Hold on a hecking minute. WATER POWERS?!

What did you think the suitcase was for, buddy?

I dunno, I thought you brought books for the journey or something!
Not... THIS!

Heh... I can see why G has grown to like you so much.

Uh, thanks?
But screw that, can you show me your awesome water powers?!

(Sigh)
You will have to wait just a little bit longer for that, buddy.

Aw…

Look at it on the bright side, dude!
We should be there soon enough.

Yeah, just keep an eye out on the place where we start looping.

Gotcha.

The group drove on The Mountain That Never Ends for about an hour. G was starting to get worried again, they should have looped back around by now. Did this place change since the last time they were here? It was hard to say. He remembered telling a few regional guards about securing this place after they beat Xtress for the first time. He now understood why those guards never responded back.

Um… Array?

Yea?

Are you sure we are going the right way?

Uhh... why are you asking me?
You know the gimmick of this place, not me.

Eh... true enough.
* coughs *
Yo Bushra! Are you sure we are going-

I heard you the first time, G.
And the answer is yes.

Huh... guess I'm just being paranoid.
It's just... Ugh... I hate caves so much...

Bushra didn't respond back to G's whining. G was noticeably frustrated by it all. He wanted to talk with Array instead but he was

too focused on driving. He decided to look outside the car from sheer boredom. When he did however, he noticed something pretty weird.

Woah… what IS that?

(Sigh)
What is it, G? Did you see your shadow for the first time or something?

(embarrassed) Peh, NO! I just saw... a shiny crystal?

Let me check... Oh shoot, you are right!
Shiny... Can we stop by and grab it?!

No, you don't understand, Bushra!
It's a GIGANTIC crystal!

That's odd.

That's what I'm saying!
I don't remember crystals covering this side of Mount Neverends...

I'm just gonna pretend to know what you guys are talking about.
* notices a sharp end coming up *
Yo mates! I think we might have just reached the loop point.

Wait, really?!

It sure seems like it.

Hm... Well I'll be damned, he is right.

* pumps his fist in the air *
Yes! That's what I'm talking about!

And then, Bushra hears something from the distance. It sounded like something was... beeping?

Something is wrong.

Are you sure, Bushra?
Perhaps you are hearing things?

No, no... I can hear very faint sounds.

And then, it hit him. He realized what was going on.

ARRAY, STOP THE CAR NO-

But he was too late. They were caught in a trap. Bushra realized that they were in the range of an already set up bomb. He braced himself for the impact. When he opened his eyes, he realized that they were falling off the mountain. He could also hear Array screaming like a girl at the top of his lungs. He knew it was the time to use his

powers. G tried to calm Array down while Bushra was lifting all of them up to the other side. When they landed safely, Bushra remembered something horrible.

WOO! That was AMAZING!
(talks to himself) Aside from maybe the screaming part.
Can we keep that a secret between us, please?
* realizes that Team Bushra were all quiet *
Uh... is there something wrong?

It's... trashed.

I know, G. I know.
We turned Artender's car to scrap metal...

What are we gonna say to him?!

Gee, I don't know!
Maybe we can blame it on your dumb blonde friend!

Hey! What's the big idea?!

This is the SECOND time I had to save people from life and death situations on this stupid mountain!

But why blame it on me?!
What was I supposed to do?

You could have noticed the beeping sounds!

So what?!
We are still alive and well!

Don't get cocky with me!
You are the reason we are now stranded here without any supplies!

Maybe... we can call for help?

Oh man, what a GREAT idea!
It's almost like THERE'S NO CONNECTION HERE!
DID YOU THINK I HAVEN'T TRIED THAT?!

Look man, don't throw all your anger at me!
I tried my best!

(scared) Uh... guys?

WHAT?!

You might want to see this...

It can’t possible be THAT bad-
Oh, dear.

Array couldn't believe what he was seeing. It was a humongous hog casually wandering around the mountain. But it looked different. It had a weird aura surrounding it. G thought this might have been a side effect of the mountain's unique purple smoke. They hid behind a giant boulder to not get spotted by the beast. They tried to sneak away afterwards.

I don't know what the heck I am looking at but it isn't pretty in the slightest.

You could say that.

Hmpf...

Can you two please stop arguing until we are safe-

Before he could finish his sentence, the hog already shattered the rock they were just hiding behind to pieces. Things were about to get messy.

Okay, Bushra.
First we take care of ugly here and then we can settle our differences once and for all!
You catch my drift?

Yeah, that sounds fair to me.

Glad you two got that sorted out because we are in deep trouble!

* looks at Array *
Do you have any ideas, smarty pants?

Hm... I'm not really used to team work but... I will give it a shot.
I think me and G should attack the beast while you distract it with your water powers.

Sounds good to me!

Hey, I didn’t agree with the plan yet-

Array stops the beast from hitting Bushra off the mountain at the last second with his gauntlet, holding it in place before he launches it back to where it charged from.

So are we doing this or not?!

(worried) Yeah, yeah, sure.

Good! Come on, G!
Let's show this thing what we are made of!

You said it!

Bushra was trying to find any traces of water under the car's remains. He was lucky to find a few bottles still intact. The hog saw what he was doing and charged towards him. Bushra used his powers to hold the beast in one place but it wasn't enough. It was too powerful, even for Bushra. Meanwhile; G and Array took advantage

of this situation and started attacking the trapped beast. The aura around the hog was starting to tire them out, however. This plan wasn't working as they were hoping for. They needed to do something drastic.

Yo Bushra!
Can you back me up for a second?

* still trying to hold the beast in place *
Uh... sure? What will it be?

We need to perform one of our combo moves!

The what now?

Watch and find out, Array!
* looks back at Bushra *
Which one should we perform, Bushra?

Hm... hammer flip to a rising waterspout?

That one will do nicely!

Alright, I'm gonna let it go.... CATCH!

Bushra slings the beast at G at rapid speed. G blocks the initial hit with his hammer and does a hammer spin move to send it back at Bushra. In response, Bushra creates a small waterspout on the ground and launches the beast to the air. G uses his hammer jump to

do the finishing blow. He hit the hog as hard as he could towards the ground before he landed safely to the ground with his hammer glide.

(huff puff) Now, THAT was tough.
We really should have used this against The Rascals!

You said it!
* laughs and sits down *
If we actually had some spare water back then, that is.

Good point.

G, that was amazing! I didn't know you had it in you!

He he... thanks Array!

No problem!
* notices Bushra sitting on the ground trying to catch his breath *
You did amazing too, Bushra!

Uh... thanks?
Not in the mood to argue right now.

Yeah, I understand.

Uh... what's that sound...
* notices something behind the smoke *

No no no no, sweet mercy NO!

The beast was still intact and it was furious. Array tried to defend them but the radiation got the better of him. There was nowhere else to run, it was over. But... G remembered something. A being that made him just as powerful as Xtress. He took one step forward and opened his arms. The beast was confused but intrigued. It was about to charge head on to the tired G. Bushra rushed towards him.

What are you doing, G?!
It better not be what I think it is…

G smiles.

Guess we will both find out.

Bushra backed away from G but Array still wasn't convinced.

Bushra, are you crazy!?
That thing is going to rip him to shreds!

Trust me, Array.
I will be fine.

B-but-

Listen to the man, Array.
He knows what he is doing.

How are you so sure about this?!
He could get hurt or worse!

* smiles *
Going on a lifetime adventure with a person like him obviously sets up some expectations.
You just gotta sit this one out, buddy.

The beast charged at the defenseless G head on. Right before it hit him, Bushra saw it. G's eyes were red once more. The beast was launched back by a charged hammer attack. The beast looked at the once defenseless G all confused.

Cute. Now it's MY turn!

Bushra tried to convince the already confused Array to hide. Array couldn't even understand what he was seeing. At that moment, he realized he barely knew anything about his so-called "best friend" He was starting to feel embarrassed.

I-I don't understand!

Calm down, Array!
It's all gonna be fine!

How much stuff did I miss... What's going on?!
What even IS that thing?

Ssh... don't panic.
* points at the frantic G *
I call that "G Minus"

What does that mean even MEAN?!

You need a LOT of context, buddy.
I will explain everything to you after the smoke clears, okay?
For real, this time.

…sure.

Array and Bushra peeked from their hiding spot to watch what was going on. "G Minus' ' was mercilessly attacking the beast to no end. It was screaming in pain as "G Minus" was beating it to its knees. Right before he could do the finishing blow, the red aura around the beast disappears and a wild boar baby appears in its place. Bushra was confused but realized what was going on. The animal must have been mutated by something... possibly even by an outsider force... He couldn't pinpoint who exactly could have been responsible for this but he had to cut his thoughts short because of "G Minus" now chasing after the harmless baby.

G, STOP!

WHAT?!

HE SAID STOP!
You are trying to harm the baby!

HAH! SO WHAT IF I KILLED THIS BABY?!
IT WON'T BRING BACK ANYTHING!

(What is he talking about...)

** looks back to the baby animal **
OH WELL! NOW, YOU ARE GONNA DIE!
** shakes his head * NOW... YOU...* Urgh...

G?
You back with us, buddy?

Urgh... I guess so…
* notices the scared baby animal *
Awww... was this the beast we were fighting?
* opens his arms *
Come here, little guy!

The wild boar baby runs away in fear in response. G was confused by its reaction and also saddened by it at the same time.

W... what happened while I lost control?

"Lost control"?

One at a time, Array.
I will explain it all to you soon.
But first, I need to talk with G.

(worried) Oh, please don't tell me my other self did anything bad-

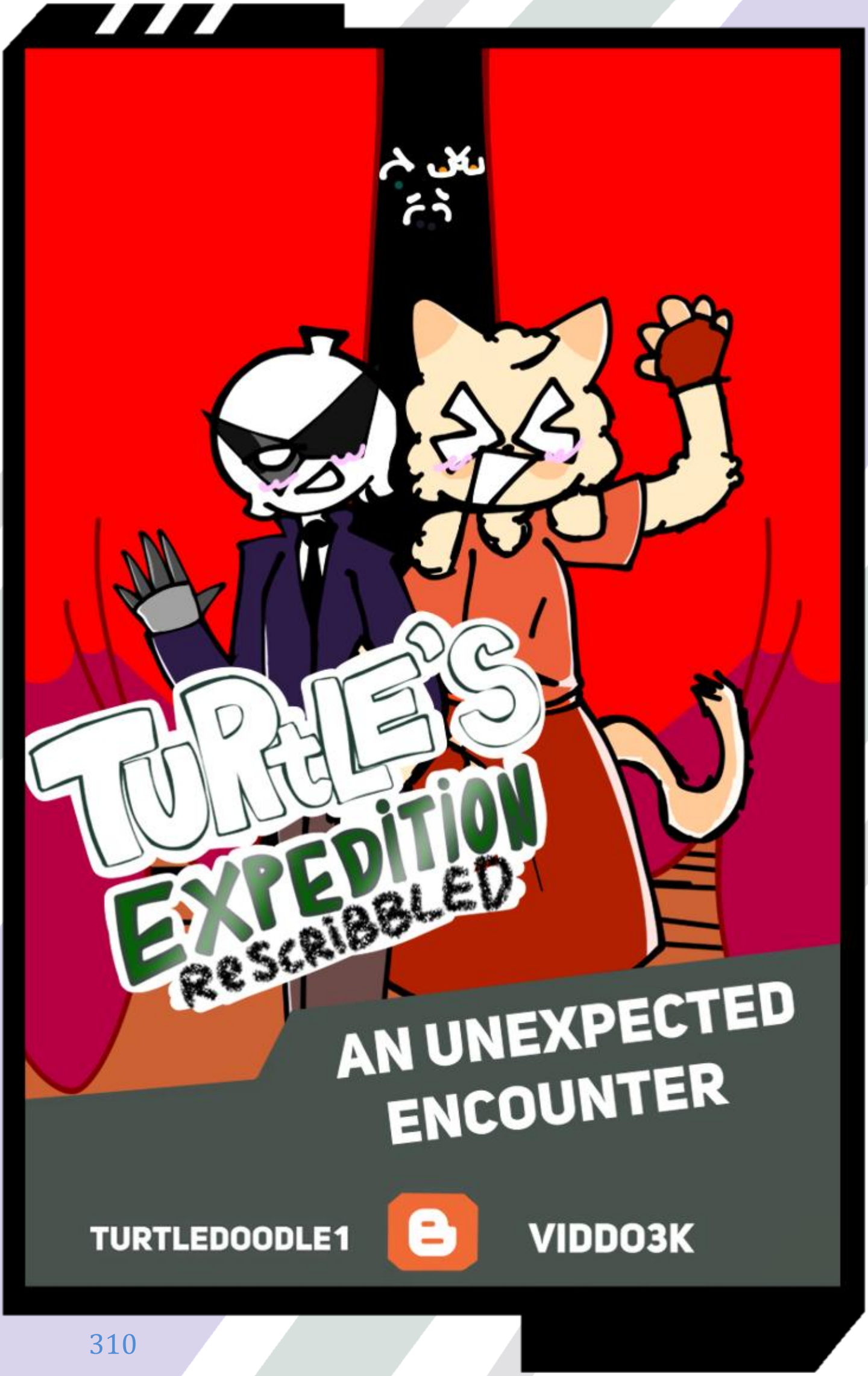
"G Minus" you mean.

DID YOU GIVE IT A NAME?!
SINCE WHEN?!

Since a few minutes ago, actually.

(Sigh) Please tell me what happened.
I need to know.

Welp. This is going to take a while.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CHAPTER 21.5: AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER

4 years ago outside MPC headquarters;

Heya, Cloe!
What's up?

* not looking at Sarpo *
Hi, Sarpo.

So uh.. what do you want to do today?
Should we go on a hoodster hunt again or...

…

Um... are you okay, Cloe?
You have been acting a bit strange since I came back from the healthcare.
Please tell me if I did something wrong-

I'm leaving MPC, Sarpo.

(shocked) Wh... WHAT?!
Cloe, please think this through-

I… SAID-

The ground started shaking resulting in Sarpo falling to the ground. He tried everything to get up from the ground but he couldn’t. It was almost like he was glued to it.

I'M LEAVING MPC FOREVER!

CLOE PLEASE, I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!
I... I JUST WANT TO BE HAPPY WITH YOU-

NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU BEG TO ME, I'M NEVER COMING BACK!
YOU PATHETIC HALF HUMAN!

N-NO…
* starts tearing up *
CLOE PLEASE, DON'T LEAVE... DON'T...

"..leave me."

Sarpo suddenly woke up from his nightmare with tears in his eyes. He looked at his surroundings all confused. Where was he and most importantly, where was Cloe?! He covered his eyes with his hands and started breathing slowly. He realized he wasn't thinking right. After trying to calm himself for a few minutes, he decided to look around. He was inside a wooden shack with Cloe sleeping next to him. He tried to remember how they ended up there. Then he remembered that the two of them came across a small town called Town Bloom and talked with the townsfolk. After striking a deal with its chief, they decided to stay there for the night after driving nonstop for 3 days. This must have been the house they were staying in.

Sarpo didn't even know why he kept having nightmares like this over and over again. Despite Cloe sticking around and even joining MPC2 alongside Sarpo, he wasn't sure why he felt this way. He looked at Cloe once again and kissed her on the forehead (which thankfully didn't wake her up) Afterwards, Sarpo tried to sleep again but he couldn't for some unknown reason. Maybe counting sheep could work, he thought. But it was pretty obvious early on that it wasn't working. So he decided on a different approach. He recalled that one of his old MPC comrades, Jack, told him that thinking about happy times helped people go back to sleep. While thinking about Jack, Sarpo started reminiscing about his childhood memories...

It was an amazing day on Planet Perdiah. It was so peaceful… until a young boy passed through the biggest flower garden in all of Perdiah in a hurry. He was so worried that he wasn't going to make it. This was a really important day for him and an even more important day for Planet Perdiah itself. He got angry at himself for getting up too late once again. He even told his mentor yesterday that he wouldn't do it again… Well, so much for that. He knew he could go faster if he didn't have to carry a heavy suitcase with him. He knew WHY he had to carry it but still… The kid checked his watch one final time to make sure he got there on time but unfortunately, he was already too late. The heartbroken kid noticed his mentor waiting for him and started slowly walking towards him. Sarpo knew he wasn't going to get off scot free from this one.

Hi, Mr. Carlos…

Hello, Sarpo.
You are late. As usual.

* nervously chuckles *
So- sorry again, sir.
It will never happen again, I promise!

* smiles *
(tired) It's okay, my boy.
I was hoping you would get used to your new wake up routine but perhaps you just need a little bit more time.
Besides, I can help you get used to it now that you are staying here.

Yep!

So... are you excited to see your new room?

YES!! My very own room!

Heh, I always said your enthusiasm was contagious!

Uhm... What does "contagious" mean?

You will learn it when you grow up.

Sarpo followed Mr. Carlos around the facility. Mr. Carlos noticed that Sarpo was upset over something but he decided to ask what it was later. After walking past the corridors for 10 minutes, they were finally here.

Care to do the honors, my boy?

YES!!!!!

Sarpo opens the door and takes a peek at his new room. It was glorious! There was a big wardrobe next to his little car bed and there were a bunch of toys lying on the carpet. Exactly how he wanted it!

So what do you think, Sarpo?

* looks at his study table and turns back at Mr. Carlos *
THIS. IS. AMAZING!
* hugs Mr. Carlos *
Thank you so much, sir!
I'm so happy that I'm staying with MPC now!

We are happy to have you here as well, kid.
I hope we have many more adventures along the way.
* looks at the clock inside the room *
Well Sarpo, we need to go back to business.
You know how it is. Follow me.

Okay! What are we gonna do today, sir?
Are we going on an underground mission or-
OOH OOH, are we gonna continue our classes?
I love the karate classes!

It's none of those things, my boy.
Just follow me and you will see what it is.

O- okay!

After Sarpo locked the door of his room, he looked at the facility in all of its glory. He was in awe of this place. He remembered talking

to his friends on the phone about how amazing this place was back when he first joined. Even though it had only been a few months, he felt like he knew everything the world had to offer. He has been a part of so many missions before with his peers and they appreciated his support. He joined because he heard the humors of a bad man called Hood Riley attacking innocent people. He personally never encountered him in any of his missions but he hoped he could meet him one day to tell him how much he despised him. Despite all that though... he was still a junior member at the end of the day. He was pretty upset that no one his age joined MPC before him. He was feeling pretty lonely because of it.

Sarpo?
Are you still in there?

Oh- I... yes, sir!

What's wrong?
You know you can always talk to me about these things, right?

Hm…

Come on, Sarpo.
Speak up.

…sure.
* takes a breath *
I love MPC so much, Mr. Carlos! I really do!
Everybody here is so nice but... I just wish there were kids my age in here too.
I feel… alone here sometimes.

Hm…
* chuckles *
Well, talk about a coincidence!

Wha-

If this meeting I am having today goes well, let's just say that your problems will be no more!

REALLY?! THAT'S SO AWESOME!

Simmer down, my boy.
I still have a question I need to ask you.

Oh?

Have you ever heard of... "Travelers"?

No? What is that?

You see, it's... a long story.
Point is, they have contacted us recently-

And?

Don't rush things, kid.
You need to hear all the details first.

(Lame but okay.)

The leader of the biggest Traveler tribe has contacted us recently.
He says they want to have a "fresh start".
And we accepted their offer.
I thought it was long overdue for us to start over.

Which means???

(Sigh) Some of them are joining MPC.
Yes, even Travelers in your age group.

That’s so awesome!
But... What exactly are these "Travelers"?
Are they from a nearby village or something?

Well... not quite.
* shows him pictures from his phone *
These are "Travelers".

Wait what-
* picks up Carlos' phone *
That's strange. They are... a humanoid animals?

Sure are.

Huh... And I thought I knew everything about Perdiah already!

Hehe... not at all, Sarpo.
Not at all.

I’m so excited!
I wonder if any of them would want to be friends!

Who knows?
Only one way to find out!

So... a-are they coming today?!

Yes?

Ugh, I didn’t wear anything special for today!
Hngrh, so frustrating! They are gonna get the wrong idea...

Hey, it's okay Sarpo.
It happens to the best of us, no need to beat yourself over it.
Besides, why do you want to give them a fake first impression instead?

I... dunno actually.
I feel a bit ashamed of how I look.

You don't need to think that way, little Sarpo.
Just be yourself and it’s all going to be okay.

* tears up *
T-thank you, Mr. Carlos!

It was my pleasure, my boy.

Sir, Mr. Hawk has arrived!
He wants to talk to you directly.

Welp. * stands up *
I must go now, Sarpo. See you later!

See you, Mr. Carlos!

Mr. Carlos then left the facility and walked towards the supposed "Traveler". Sarpo was watching the outside from a nearby window. The creature looked like a hawk but at the same time... not really? He was wearing actual clothes, even shoes matching their toes. Sarpo quickly noticed the giant caravan heading towards the facility as well. He took one step towards Mr. Carlos with an angry face. Sarpo was starting to get worried. Weren't they on good terms? Wait... Mr. Carlos didn't clarify how their current relationship was... Sarpo was getting worried.

Hello, Mr. Hawk.

Hello, sir Carlos.

* reaches out for a hand shake *
I'm glad to finally meet you in person, Mr. Hawk.

* holds Carlos' hand *
Same could be said to you.

I know Humans and Travelers have... a rocky history but I'm so happy that you contacted us.

We could not pass on an opportunity to unite both sides.

And I'm so glad you did.
* notices the giant caravan right next to Mr. Hawk *
Is that... you know?

Yep, it's them, alright.
I hope you and your MPC clan will take good care of them.

I sure hope so as well.
I will be sure to contact you if something "drastic" happens.

Thank you so much.

It was a pleasure to do business with you, Mr. Hawk.

* prepares to take off *
Same goes for you.

* waves behind him *
Safe travels, Mr. Hawk!

Mr. Carlos looks at the sky with a smile on his face. After years of communicating, their hard work has finally paid off. Mr. Carlos looks back at the sky one last time before reentering the building.

Mr. Carlos! Are you okay?!

* giggles *
Yes, I'm fine, Sarpo.
Thank you for asking.

Is… that what a Traveler looks like?

Yep, they are certainly interesting Perdians.

So... what now?

Now, I have an announcement to make!
* grabs a microphone *
ATTENTION EVERYONE! I ADVISE EVERYONE TO COME TO THE CANTEEN AREA!

Woah! So cool!

Shortly after, the entirety of the canteen area was filled with MPC members. There were so many, in fact, that they were blocking Sarpo's view. He could see Mr. Carlos ordering someone to call the Travelers from the other room.

HELLO EVERYBODY!
TODAY IS A BIG DAY FOR ALL OF PERDIAH!
TODAY, WE ARE FINALLY MAKING PEACE WITH OUR FELLOW TRAVELERS!

There were a bunch of clapping sounds coming from the crowd. Sarpo was afraid that he could lose his sense of hearing. Mr. Carlos saw Sarpo struggling and decided to put away the microphone for a short while.

I talked with one of the Traveler tribe leaders to make a deal!
We thought that us, MPC members, befriending young Travelers would help both sides bond!
I want all of you to treat these Travelers as your equals!
They are just as Human as you are!
* grabs the microphone again *
SAY IT WITH ME NOW! THEY ARE YOUR EQUALS!

"THEY ARE OUR EQUALS!"
"THEY ARE OUR EQUALS!"
"THEY ARE OUR EQUALS!"

NOW... SAY HELLO TO YOUR NEW FRIENDS!

Right after his announcement, a bunch of kid Travelers entered the canteen with confusion on their faces. They were trying to figure out where they were to begin with. But in response, the MPC members greeted them with kindness and almost immediately started befriending them. Mr. Carlos was so happy that this was the case. Almost every MPC member was having fun with their new Traveler friends - all except for one person.

Sarpo? Why aren't you having fun with one of your new friends?

I don't think they like me all that much...

It's... alright, Sarpo.
Maybe they will grow to like you later on, eh?

Yeah... I guess...

Then much to Sarpo’s surprise, he notices a lonely cat Traveler sitting on the left corner of the room.

Uhm... who is that?

Hm...
* checks his list *
That young lady there is called Cloe Meow.
It says here that she is usually pretty talkative but that doesn't seem to be the case now.

Maybe she isn't used to places like this?

There's only one way to find out, little one.

…which is?

* puts his hands on Sarpo's shoulders *
You should make the first move, young man.
Go talk to her and who knows?!
Maybe you two could get along!
You have the perfect opportunity!

O- okay!
H- here I go!

Sarpo runs towards the lonely cat lady.

H- hello?
How can I help you?

Hi there!
My name is Sarpo Fields!
I'm a junior member of MPC!
Nice to meet you!

Thanks?
Nice to meet you too…

What about your name?

My name is Cloe Meow.

Why is your last name "Meow"?

... isn't it obvious?

Yeah... probably shouldn't have asked that.
* closes his eyes with his hands *
Gosh, I already blew it…

It's fine... really.

You…
* sniffs *
You think so?

I guess so.
I don’t mind it.

Well then…
Say, where are you from?

I come from a Traveler tribe called “The Riskin Tribe”.

They sent me here alongside my other Traveler friends of my age for some sort of "business".

Ooh… interesting!
* looks at Mr. Carlos and sees him doing a thumbs up *
So… why were you sitting here all by yourself?

I just don’t think I… belong here, really.
My other Traveler friends already befriended other human members and I don't even know how.
I miss home already…

Well... what about that home?
* notices that Cloe was looking at him passive aggressively *
I- I mean, if it isn't personal, that is!

(Sigh) It was such a gorgeous place.
It was filled to the brim with flowers and a bunch of play areas we could run in.
And the night view...
* closes her eyes *
It was perfect...

Hm…

Sarpo stands up and reaches out his hand.

I would love to help you get used to here!

Really?

Didn’t you say you were also new here?

Well... Mr. Carlos explained to me how everything in here worked when I first arrived here.
So I basically know this place like the back of my hand!
* wiggles his hand *
So, what do you say?

Hm... I'm not sure.
But considering all my other options...
* holds his hand *
Sure, why not.

Sarpo helps her get up and the two walk towards Mr. Carlos.

Hi kids, glad to see you two getting along!

Thank you, Mr. Carlos!

No problem, Sarpo.
* looks at Cloe *
Hello young lady, how are we handling so far?

It's fine, I suppose.
I think I will feel a lot better once Sarpo explains what goes on in this place.

That's a very fair response, Ms. Meow!
I am %100 sure that Sarpo will teach you all of it in less than a week!

* winks at Sarpo *
Won’t you, Sarpo?

I-I guess I will?

Heh!
Then you must be really good at this!

Sarpo hides under his hat because of the embarrassment. Cloe was confused while Carlos was chuckling.

It’s alright, Sarpo.
You can get out of your shell now.

…okay.

You are so silly.
I like you.

Thanks??
* quickly shakes his head *
Before you go Mr. Carlos, can I ask you something?

Sure.
What is it?

Can me and Cloe become roommates?
I always wanted to have a roommate!

PLEASE, Mr. Carlos!

Hm... If she is okay with it, then it's fine in my book.

I- I suppose so.
I never had a roommate before...

Hey, there's a first for everything!

Heh... thank you, sir Carlos.
I hope Sarpo and I will get along well.

I hope so too!

Alright, now that we got that settled, I have a very important call to make to one of the nearby regional leaders.
Take care, you two.

You too!

See you later, sir Carlos!

The two watch as Mr. Carlos exits the room, leaving only the two of them inside the canteen.

So... what now?

Hm… well.
First things first, do you want to take a peek at our room?

Sure! It could be a nice refresher before we start exploring inside the facility!

Awesome!
* points at the exit door *
Then let's go!

Right behind ya!

Sarpo played catch with Cloe on their way to Sarpo's (and soon to be Cloe's) room. Everyone he passed by was surprised by the fact that Sarpo got a Traveler friend. He decided to ignore them and continue walking.

* opens the door *
And we are here now, Cloe!
What do you think?

Woah...
* looks around *
Quite the fascinating place you got there.

Aww, thank you!
No one complimented my room before!

Not even sir Carlos?

Nope, he always told me to tidy up my room.
I think it's tidied up as it is!

That's debatable but I still like this place!
* notices the picture stand *
Woah, what is that?

Oh, it's just a picture I took with Mr. Carlos when I first joined MPC.

Huh... interesting.

* notices that Cloe was still upset *
Is there something wrong, Cloe?

* sits down *
It's just... really hard to get used to this, you know?
I spent so much of my life living alongside other Travelers and now, all of it has changed.
I didn't want to leave my mentors in our old tribe either.
They taught me so many things back then.

You know?
* sits right next to her *
I get how you feel.

Really?

Yup. Back when I first joined MPC, everything felt so alien to me too.
So many new places, so many new faces, the list goes on!
But eventually, they accepted me for who I am.
* looks at Cloe in the eyes *
And I believe the same will happen to you.

T- thank you so much, Sarpo!
It's so nice to finally talk to someone who gets how I feel about all of this...
* starts sobbing *
I'm...

All of a sudden, Cloe hugs Sarpo. He was shocked by this, he didn't think she had so much repressed emotions haunting her. He hugs her in return to comfort her. He couldn't believe he was actually connecting with someone after being here for so long. It seemed like the feeling was mutual as well. Cloe also seemed very happy that she was with him. Sarpo knew this was the start of a beautiful friendship...

A few months had passed since Cloe and Sarpo first met. During that time, Sarpo got very attached to Cloe. So did she. He loved spending time with her. The next day after her arrival, he borrowed a camera from Mr. Carlos, and from that day forward, he took pictures of Cloe and him just having the time of their lives. He showed her everything that MPC had to offer. They cooked meals, brushed their teeth , played games, read books, went shopping, and did so much more together.

But they were still aware of their duties. They were staying at MPC for a reason, after all. Their tasks were pretty simple, for the most part. Tag along with other older MPC members while they were protecting villages and helping them catch Hoodsters. But today's mission was different.

* notices something lightly touching him over and over again *
Ugh... what's going on....

Sarpo gets up, only to find Cloe still touching him over and over again. It looks like Cloe just wanted Sarpo to wake up. Sarpo looked at the time and sighed in relief.

Thank you so much for waking me up, Cloe!
You are a lifesaver!

No problem, Sarpo!
Did you sleep well last night?

Kinda. Was just stressed out for today's mission, that's all.

I see…

The two stare at each other blankly without saying a single thing. Sarpo realized that Cloe wanted to tell him something but she was too embarrassed to say so.

It’s alright, Cloe.
You can tell me about what you are thinking.

Well, you see...
* points at her belly *
I don't know how to cook food.

Is that so?

Yep, usually our mentor figures prepared food for us.
So I am not really used to this.

Well… I know cooking.
At least a bit.

Can you teach me then?

O- of course!
Anything for my best friend!

* lightly punches him as a joke *
Psst... stop it, you!

He he... Well, it looks like we still have some time before Mr. Carlos calls us for our mission.

Ooh, ooh! Then you start teaching me how to cook in the meantime!

Yup! This is gonna be fun!

And thus, Sarpo started teaching her the basics of how to cook dishes. After a long period of time of them bonding, it was time for them to eat. The two sat down and started eating their food. While they were still eating, Sarpo quickly took a peek inside their wardrobe. It was thankfully still inside. When he looked back, he realized that Cloe was done eating and was waiting for him to finish his own plate. He quickly finished his own plate and the two started

preparing for their mission. While Cloe wasn't looking, Sarpo sneaked towards the wardrobe and picked up the present he got for her. He put it in his backpack before Cloe could find out. They exited their room shortly after. When they reached the canteen area, they saw Mr. Carlos talking to a few MPC members. He quickly noticed them in the crowd, though.

Good morning, Sarpo and Ms. Meow!
Glad to see you two finally arrive in time.

Yeah... Cloe helped me wake up.
* looks at the smiling Cloe next to him *
I taught her how to cook as well!

That's wonderful to hear!
I never could have guessed you two would get along so fast!

Hehe! Funny how things work out, right, Cloe?

Yep.

Speaking of which, I hope all of you are prepared for today's mission.

We sure hope so.

* raises her hand *
Can you explain what it was about again, just for good measure?

* whispers *
Did you forget about it?

* whispers back *
Yea... I wasn't paying attention to what he said yesterday.

Carlos heard their whispers but pretended to not hear.

* chuckles *
Very well. We are going to hunt down the leader of the Hoodsters, Hood Riley himself!

No way…

Yep. He is a cunning leader who never gives up his ideals.
The point of our mission is that we may have found a pattern in their attacks, and we are striking the possible area today!
Did you understand, Sarpo?

Uhm…

Cloe shakes her head, looks like she didn't understand a single thing either.

Well, I tried.

So when are we going?

Rightttttttt NOW!

Awesome! Are you excited, Cloe?

Yup! I can't wait to show him what we are made of!

This is gonna be so much fun!

3 hours later, inside the Enchanted Forest;

Man, this sucks.

Quit whining my boy, we are almost there.

(Sigh)

This trip was the worst! Sarpo was expecting a fun mission like always, but all they did so far was just walk! He has been walking with Cloe by his side ever since they left MPC headquarters. He was getting pretty tired, but he knew that it was worth it for their cause. Meanwhile, Cloe was looking around the forest they were passing through and taking photos of them. It reminded Cloe of her old home... While they were passing by a wooden bridge, she saw something beautiful and started pointing at it. Sarpo was too focused on the road to notice her doing that in the first place. She was pretty upset about it.

HOLD IT! We are here...

* looks around *
This place?

Yeah, what about it?

I mean... I thought it would look a lot cooler, you know-

Sssh… stay quiet.
I need to double check something.

Mr. Carlos leaves Sarpo, Cloe, and the rest of the MPC members behind to check up on something. His suspicions were right. There was a huge hoodster army being commanded by none other than Hood himself. Mr. Carlos quickly told the MPC members to hide somewhere. Sarpo, out of sheer panic, didn't know what to do. He realized that Cloe was also getting scared. So he tells Cloe to hide inside one of the bushes before they could get spotted. Sarpo told her that it was going to be all right before he also tried to find a hiding spot. Unfortunately for him, he was too late for something once again.

Well, well, well. Look what we got here!
* points at Sarpo *
A young pumpkin like you should not be wandering around these parts all by himself!
* reaches out his hand *
Come now, join my Hoodster army!
I promise you can get cooler looking glasses there than your ugly ones.

Before Sarpo could say how much he despised him, Cloe suddenly jumps out of the bushes and dropkicks Hood in the face.

UGH!
* holding his face *
HOW DARE YOU?!
HOODSTERS, CAPTURE THEM!

NOW IS OUR CHANCE!
MOVE, MOVE, MOVE!

Sarpo picked up a rock and threw it at the already pissed-off Hood. Afterwards, he immediately helped Cloe get up and started running away from the Hoodster army. Was she crazy? What was she doing? But Cloe looked proud of what she had achieved. Sarpo saw a hiding spot at the last second, and both were now safe from the attacks. After a few minutes of both sides fighting each other, the gunshots stopped. Sarpo and Cloe got out of their hiding spot and saw Hood running away with a few of his hoodsters.

THIS ISN'T OVER YET, CARLOS!
I WILL BE BACK WITH EVEN MORE HOODSTERS AND EVEN BETTER WEAPONS!
AND I'M GOING TO MAKE THAT TRAVELER PAY FOR RUINING MY BEAUTIFUL FACE-

Just go home, you dingus.

I- ARGH!

Woah... what was THAT?!

Just usual Hood stuff.
He is a coward at heart.
* looks at both of them dead in the eye *

As for you two...

(Please, don't get mad; please, don't get mad-)

I'M SO PROUD OF YOU TWO!
YOU TWO WERE AMAZING OUT THERE!

Huh?

We… were?

Almost none of your older MPC comrades even attempted to attack Hood directly before!
You two are INSANE and I LOVE IT!

Uh… yay?

You two have amazing potential.
* points at Cloe *
Especially you, Ms. Meow!

T- thank you, sir Carlos!
It is an honor to be a part of MPC.

You two are so kind!
* looks at the other MPC members celebrating in the background
*Let's go back, you crazy goobers!

YAY! WE ARE GOING BACK HOME! RIGHT, CLOE?

Hm…

Cloe?

Can we visit somewhere before we go back home?

Uh... sure?
Where exactly?

It's a flower garden I saw on our way here.
There were so many precious flowers there.

Ooh, that's neat! I would love to go there too!
But I think we should ask Mr. Carlos first.

Yeah… you are right.

(confused) What are you two waiting for?
We are going back home.

Uhm… sir?

Yeah?

Cloe wants to go to the flower garden with me so... can we go there?

Oooh! That's wonderful!
Of course you can go!
You two deserve it after your smashing performance!

Awesome!
Thank you, Mr. Carlos!

My pleasure!
Just don't be too late, okay?

Sure!

Sarpo waved goodbye to the MPC members until he could no longer see them. He looked at Cloe.

Care to lead the way, Cloe?

Of course! Follow me!

Cloe smiled and started running towards the garden. She was so fast that Sarpo was having a hard time keeping up. While running, he noticed that the sky was getting dark. When he got caught up with Cloe, she was already smelling all of the flowers and taking pictures of them. Sarpo decided to lay down somewhere comfy while Cloe continued picking flowers. He took a peek inside his backpack and waited for the perfect moment to show Cloe his present. After a while, Cloe came near him and gave him the flowers. She was covered in flower petals too. Sarpo then thanked her for everything she did today. He looked up and saw the magnificent stars in the sky. Today was so amazing, he thought. He was lying down on the ground with his best friend in the world right next to him.

The stars are so gorgeous today, aren't they?

They are...
* yawns *
What a day, right?

Indeed. I had so much fun!

Me too.
What you pulled off today was so cool!

* chuckles *
T- thanks!

How did you find the courage to do that?

Seeing you all helpless there scared me so much and I just knew I had to do something to stop Mr. Hood.
So... yeah.

That's interesting.
I just wanted to say "thanks" again. That's all.

Hm...
* looks at Sarpo's face *
I can see that you have something on your mind.

Wh- what?!
* nervously picks up his backpack *

Erm... NO!

* smiles *
Come on, Sarpo!
You know you can be honest with me, right?

I suppose so...
* takes a deep breath *
Alright, I got something for you...

Really?!

Yep!
* picks up the present from his backpack *
I wanted to get you something super unique.

Woah, thank you, Sarpo!

No problem, Cloe.
Come on, open it!

Alright!
* quickly opens the present with her claws *
Woah, are these-

Yup! I wanted to get you rare flowers from all over Perdiah!
I gotta admit, it took a lot of researching for me to find these bad boys but I hope you like them!

* smells the flower bouquet *

Like them… I LOVE them!
* hugs Sarpo *
Thank you, Sarpo.
You really know how to make a little gal like me happy!

No problem, Cloe.
I will do anything that makes my best friend happy!
* hears Cloe sobbing while still hugging him *
Uhm... Cloe? Are you okay?

Y- yeah, I'm fine!
* blows her nose *
It's just... none of my friends treated me like this before!
You are just... so kind and nice!

He he...
* starts blushing *
Thanks, Cloe!
You know what Mr. Carlos always says!
"There's always a first for everything!"

* chuckles *
It definitely sounds a lot better when he says it.

Hah! I suppose you are right.

* looking at the stars while holding Sarpo's hands *
I wonder... will things always stay the same?

Who knows, Cloe.
But all I know is that I'll always stick by your side, no matter what happens!

Re... really?

Of course! You are still my best friend and nothing will ever change that!

I... I don't even know what to say...
* sniffs *
Thank you so much for being with me, Sarpo!

Of course, Cloe! No matter what happens in the future, I promise you...

"...we will never be apart."

Sarpo wakes up from his dream and notices Cloe lightly touching him to wake him up again… just like always.

Ugh... What's going on?

Morning, hon!

* sighs in relief *
Morning Cloe.

Is something wrong, hon?

* holds her hand *
No, nothing at all.
Thank you for... everything really.

Uhm... okay?

Now if you can excuse me, I need a refresher.
Be right back, Cloe!

Okay sweetie.
I'll start tidying up our stuff.

Sweet. Thank you, Cloe.

Sarpo gets up from his bed and goes to the bathroom to wash his face. What a long trip down memory lane that was! He usually didn't have long dreams like this either, but he wasn't complaining. After washing his face, he sat on the couch and looked inside his backpack. At that moment, he got a weird sense of deja vu. The dream was a sign all along.

Oh, Cloeeee!

What is it, hon?

I got something for you!

Ooh! What is it?

* reaches out to his bag and pulls out a gift for Cloe *
And TADAA!

Oh my goodness... I-

Cloe was wagging her tail in excitement. She picked up the orange dress Sarpo just got for her and continued looking at it for minutes on end. It was the most beautiful thing she has seen in her entire life.

Sarpo, honey, I-

What do you think, Cloe?

This... this is AMAZING!
Tha- thank you, Sarpo!

It was my pleasure.
* smiles *
Do you want to try it on?

YES, YES, **YES!**

He he...

Wait. What will you wear for today then, hon?

* giggles *
Don't worry, Cloe....

" I already got that covered."

Meanwhile, three figures were walking down the other side of the Mountain That Never Ends.

EUGH! This STINKS!

Quit your complaining, Joyce!
I'm still mad at your INCOMPETENCE when we fought that blonde kid!

What do ya mean, boss-man?
We still got his stuff!

* turns back and looks at Joyce *
We almost lost to a LITERAL CHILD, JOYCE!

Okay and?

Yea... no, Joyce.
Boss has a point.

Ah don't remember asking for YA' opinion, baldo!

ENOUGH!

Sorry…

Hey, don't blame me!
Murray did it!

What do you mean?

Ya know, one of ya' traps on that dumb mountain got set off yesterday!

Joyce, that is not even relevant to our conversation.

Whatever.

Speaking of that though... Did you salvage materials from that scrap car, Murray?

Yes, sir!

PHEW! Glad ya did 'cuz that car was MAD ugly!

I... guess?
I just thought it looked familiar.

* stops the two with his right hand *
HOLD IT!
* points underneath them *
Do you two see that?

What?

What is it, boss man?

We may have found a new town to loot!

* realizes something *
But sir, I know it's hard to see but all the townsfolk are standing in front of a stand.

So? That just makes our job MUCH easier!

You don't get it, sir-

HOW DARE YA SAY THAT TO OUR BOSS, YA BALD FREAK?! AH WILL-

Let him talk, Joyce.
I'm interested.

Thank you, sir.
* clears his throat *
As I was saying, the townsfolk might have prepared all of this for... possible celebrities.

And how did you get that idea?

Murray quickly crafts a binoculars with the scrap metal and looks at the crowd.

I can see two people waving at the crowd, one of them has dope looking shades while the other... is a cat?

Haven't ya ever seen a Traveler before, Murray?

I did... but I don’t recognize this one.

GIMME THAT!
* picks up the binoculars from Murray's hands *
Oh my.

Do you recognize them, boss?

I sure do!
We might have stumbled upon a jackpot, boys!

HEY!

* chuckles *
Change of plans. Forget the crummy town!
We are gonna kidnap the heads of MPC instead!

"Those MPC scum won't know what hit 'em!"

Thank you everyone so much for letting us stay in your little town!

We couldn't have hoped for anything better!
So really, thanks to all of you!

The crowd continued cheering for them like they had been doing for the past few minutes. Even though both of them appreciated it, they were getting annoyed at the loud screaming.

Alright, let us know if your town needs any help from MPC2!
We would love to help you out then!

Have a good one, everyone!

Sarpo and Cloe waved goodbye at the crowd and then entered their roadster. After they drove away from the town, the two sighed in relief.

Welp, guess that's over with.

Yep. Did you book the place, hon?

Sure did! I'm so excited for our vacation!
Gosh, I have been waiting for this for so long!

Same here, hon!
Think of all the amazing places we can visit on our way there!

Yep! It's going to be so awesome!
* his phone starts ringing *
Shoot! Hold on a second, Cloe!

Alright.

* turns on the speaker mode and answers the call *
Hello?

Heya, Sarpo.
It's me, Artender.

Oh, hello Artender! How is it going?
How are the kids?

It's going pretty good, just a bit busier than usual.
And the kids are fine, Emily says "Hi" by the way.

Haha, hi Emily!
Glad that she's getting along with you two.

Same here, she’s so adorable.
But yeah, how's the vacation going?

Pretty good, still on our way to the hotel though.

I see... If you two aren't busy, can I ask you something?

Sure. What is it?

Can you try to contact Team Bushra?
We haven't heard a word from them since they left with Array.

Left with who now?

Oh, right. I forgot to explain it to you guys.
In short, they left with G's childhood friend to find a place called

Temple Skulled.

Wait a second, I thought those temples getting actived was a myth!

Well, G says otherwise.
I'm just getting worried that something might have happened to them on their way there.

Alright, Artender. I will let you know if I can contact them.

Thank you, Sarpo.
I hope you two continue having a wonderful trip.

Thank you so much, Artender!
You guys stay safe too.

No problem, Ms. Meow.
(What did G use to say... oh, right.)
Artender, peacin' out!

Sarpo ends the call.

Man, I hope they are okay.

Same, hon.

I'm a bit suspicious of this "Array" character, though.
G never told me about him.

Maybe mind control shenanigans?

Peh, that's ridiculous!

"Next thing you are gonna tell me that we are being followed!"

Did you two hear that?

Hear what?

The temple, moron!

That's NOT how ya' talk to a lady!
Ah'm calling mah lawyers!

We are wanted criminals though-

Shut it, Murray.

Do you two not realize what we have stumbled upon?!

No?

Not really, boss.

I heard stories of those temples making wishes come true!
I have encountered one of those temples before I met with you two morons.
But when I tried to enter those temples, I failed.
So I thought it was all a farce. If what this "Artender"-

He he, "Fartender"!

* coughs *
As I was saying; if that guy is right, we may have a golden opportunity on our hands!

OOH! Ah always wanted orange heels!
Can those temples make that come true?!

Erm... yes!

WOOOOO!

What do you want for yourself, Murray?

Uhm... a nice workshop?

LAME!

Keep it quiet, Joyce!
They are gonna find out that we are here!

What do you want for yourself, boss?

Yeah! What is it, boss-man?

I… want my other eye back.

Ah.

Well, shucks.

And also money, of course.

Ah’m much more on board with that, yeah.

* clears his throat and tries to change the topic *
So what's the plan now, boss?
Do we retreat to find Temple Skulled or do we continue following them around in the hopes of kidnapping them?

*shrugs *
What about both?!

Pardon?

Joyce is right, Murray.
We can pull off both if we are careful.
Because...
* stands up *
WE ARE THE RASCALS! WE CAN DO ANYTHING!

YEAH!

(Aside from fighting against a superpowered kid, we don't talk about that.)

Now, follow me.

"We have to be extra careful while following them around!"

Meanwhile, Sarpo and Cloe were still driving towards their destination. While Sarpo was listening to the tunes on the radio, he realized that Cloe wasn't exactly having a great time. At a quick glance, it looked like she wanted to say something to Sarpo.

Hon, are you okay?

* yawns *
I'm fine, Sarpo.

* turns off the radio and looks at Cloe *
I feel like you are upset at something, Cloe.
Do you want to stop by somewhere and relax?

Yeah, sure.

* looks around and starts smiling after seeing a particular place *
Well Cloe, I found the perfect spot for us!

Hm?

* stops the roadster and points to their left *
See?

* covers her mouth in shock *
Oh my goodness...

Yep! I can't believe we found somewhere like this in the middle of nowhere!

I- I can't believe it either!

* opens the doors with his keys *
Come on, Cloe!

* starts smiling *
I'm coming, hon!

The two started running inside the flower garden that they just found. They haven't done something like this in forever. The exhilaration that the garden gave them was unmatched. Both of them felt like kids again after so much had happened between them. Cloe lied down on the ground and started playing with the flowers. Sarpo, on the other hand, spotted a gorgeous flower in the middle of the garden. He was getting pricked by roses, but it was all worth it for her. He picked up the flower and rushed towards Cloe. She was sitting on the ground, smelling all the flowers around her.

Cloe!

Sarpo?

* sits next to her *
I got you something, hon.

Oh?

* shows her the red flower *

I got you this!

Sarpo, it's... so pretty!

Not as pretty as yourself, honey.
* puts the flower on her right ear *
You look gorgeous, Cloe!

T-thank you…

Cloe?
Are you alright?

And to Sarpo's surprise, Cloe started tearing up. She covered her eyes and started sobbing. He hasn't seen her like this since... the day she left MPC.

W- why?!

(confused) What do you mean, Cloe?
Did I do something wrong?

W- why?!
I... I'm a horrible person, Sarpo.
After I left you all alone all those years ago, I never apologized to Emily and yet...
* points at her dress *
...you still did all of this for me.
I don't deserve any of it.

* holds Cloe's hands *
Cloe. You are the most beautiful flower in this entire garden.
No matter what happened between us all those years ago, look at us!
We are still together!

I-

You don't have to feel bad about yourself, Cloe.
I made grave mistakes while we were kids too.
You don't have to blame yourself for them anymore.
* scratches her head *
I'm with you now and I'll never leave your side again.

I- I...
* hugs Sarpo *
Thank you, Sarpo...
(still crying) I'm so sorry for EVERYTHING!

* tries to comfort her *
Ssh... it's okay, Cloe.
Let it all out. I'm with you.

* sniffs *
I'm so happy that you are with me, Sarpo.

Me too, Cloe. Me too....

Sarpo quickly peeked inside his bag before getting up. There was a small red box at the very bottom of the bag. Was he ready to do this?

He felt so conflicted. After a brief moment, he closed the bag and thought to himself;

"No, not yet."

Well, let's not get all sappy now, shall we?
We still have an amazing vacation ahead of us, Cloe!

You are right, hon.
* holds Sarpo's robotic hand to get up *
And I can't wait to spend all of it with you!

...huh.
* looks for the keys in his pockets *
That's weird.
Hon, did you pick up the keys instead?

Nah but ah did!

In pure shock, Sarpo backed a few steps away. There they were, the criminals that MPC2 never managed to capture. And worst of all, they were holding Cloe hostage. The bald one was holding a gun next to her head, although Sarpo noticed that he looked nervous doing it.

Hey there, Mr. Fields!
What a nice day to finally meet you.

Shut it.
* looks at Cloe *
Let her go now or you will face the consequences!

Your cat girlfriend?!
* chuckles *
Don't worry about her.
We do not want to hurt you either, Mr. Fields.
* points at Sarpo's pockets *
We just want some of that precious MPC cash of yours.
Then we will let you go.

Why should I trust you at all?

We might be thieves but we are not liars.

Sarpo's heart was racing from sheer fear. He looked at Cloe to reassure her that it would all be okay.

So, what will it be?

Well, my answer is... NO!

Suddenly, Cloe kicked Murray's chest and made him drop his gun. She then hit Murray with a flurry of claw attacks. Meanwhile, Sarpo threw his boomerang towards Markus. He dodged it but Sarpo's intent wasn't to hit him, it was to distract him instead.

UGH! You said she would be harmless!

SHUT UP, MURRAY!
* picks up a potion from her bag *
I will just stun both instead!

OH NO, YOU DON’T!

Sarpo then threw his boomerang towards Joyce, causing it to break on top of Joyce. While Sarpo was running at the now stumbled Joyce, he was hit with one of Markus' arrows. It thankfully hit his robotic arm instead of his regular one. Sarpo picked up his key and ran towards Cloe to make sure she was okay. Murray, on the other hand, was helping Markus get up. He reached out to his pocket and threw smoke bombs all around the garden. Sarpo was having a hard time finding Cloe as a result. It was total chaos. Meanwhile, the Rascals were running away from the scene with Markus carrying the stunned Joyce on his shoulders.

SHUT UP, MURRAY!

Good thinking, Murray!

Thank you, sir!
What's our next move?

Trying to kidnap them without Joyce is almost impossible!
* looks behind them *
We are going to Temple Skulled before they find out about our intentions!

Alright, sir.
* pulls out a little drone from his pocket which transforms into a midsize truck *
This should do the trick!

(annoyed) Couldn't you build a larger one?

Sorry sir but this is the best I could have done with the materials I got.

...okay.
This should hopefully be enough.
* jumps to the back side of the truck *
Start the truck, Murray!
They are going to catch up!

While they were driving away, Markus saw Sarpo and Cloe chasing after them with their roadster. Cloe was in the driver's seat this time. Markus tried to shoot arrows at them, but Sarpo was blocking all of his projectiles. They were closing with every passing second. Something drastic had to happen.

AH'LL CRUSH YA! WHA-
* looks around herself all confused *
WHERE AM I?!

You got stunned by your own potion, moron!
* points behind them *
Now make yourself useful and throw potions at them!

*smiles *
Ya' got it, boss-man!

STOP IN THE NAME OF MPC2!

* throws a fire potion at Sarpo *
NEVER! ALSO HORRIBLE NAME!

WHY DIDN'T YOU USE THAT POTION WHILE WE WERE IN THE GARDEN?!

Ah forgot, okay?!

Nevermind.
* prepares to shoot another arrow *
Lend me one of your slowness potions, Joyce!

Sure thing, Mr. Bossy!

Here goes nothing!

* sees something in the distance and points at it*
Honey, look!

What is it, Cloe?!
...what in the world?

Sir, you might need to see this!

I'M BUSY TRYING TO SHOOT THE ROADSTER, MURRAY!
WHAT IS IT-
Oh.

While the chase was still going on, the Rascals and the MPC duo were shocked to see a giant crystal sticking out from the ground on top of a nearby hill. They were all so confused about what they were looking at.

MURRAY!

Yes, sir?

Drive towards the crystal!

Sir, are you sure this is a good idea?!
If the floor is too bumpy, we might not be able to make it to the other side!

IT'S WORTH THE RISK!

JUST DO IT!

OKAY, OKAY!
BRACE YOURSELVES!

HOLD ONTO SOMETHING, JOYCE!

YIPPEEE!

Murray takes a hard turn to the right, and he continues driving the truck on top of the crystal. Sarpo and Cloe, however, stopped their roadster on the road, and I had to watch them run away once again.

WOO HOO!
THAT WAS AWESOME!

YOU SON OF A GUN, YOU DID IT!

* smiles *
Thank you, sir!

Now that we got those rats away from our tail...
* pulls out a map from Joyce's bag *
We can go to Temple Skulled!

(Hey, where did that come from?!)

* gives the map to Murray in the driver's seat *
Get us to Temple Skulled, Murray!

Yes, sir!

TEMPLE SKULLED, HERE WE COME!

A few hours later, in the middle of the night;

... I understand.
Thank you.
* ends the call *

* yawns *
What happened, hon?

They... gave our room to someone else.
Because we were late.

…

(Sigh) I'm so sorry, Cloe.
I really wanted this vacation to be perfect...

* holds Sarpo's left hand *
Hey. It's alright, hon.

How, Cloe?!
We don't even have a place to stay now!

Oh, shush you.
Blame it on those dastardly Rascals instead!
Besides...
* lies next to Sarpo *

I still had a lovely day with the most kind man in the world.
Thank you so much for everything, hon.

Before Sarpo could respond back, Cloe fell asleep right next to him.

Heh...
* scratches her head as Cloe starts hugging him asleep *
I'm so happy that you are with me, Cloe.
You are still the beautiful flower I met all those years ago.

Even though Sarpo wasn't sure what they were going to do tomorrow, it didn't matter to him at that moment. The safety of his loved one was far more important to him. Sarpo picks up a blanket from his bag and covers both of them with it. He kissed Cloe on the forehead before saying;

"I love you."

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EXPEDITION
RESCRIBBLED
I'M WITH STUPID
GET A LOAD OF THESE IDIOTS
SMELLY BEAVERS
PEACEFUL HORIZON
TURTLEDOODLE1
VIDDO3K

CHAPTER 22: PEACEFUL HORIZON

A few hours after the "Mount Neverends" incident;

...and that's why we have superpowers.

So. Let me get this straight.
You two just happened to break a gem that was quite literally linked to an evil sorcerer?!

That's the gist of it.

That's very dumb and so COOL at the same time!

I guess.

And now you guys are part of MPC2 because of that?

Yeah, pretty much.

That's pretty interesting.
Man, does it feel good to finally catch up with you guys!

* smiles *
Can say the same for you, Array!
You have been so honest with us ever since you came back!

…right.

Hm?

Oh, nothing!
Sorry, I was just thinking of something.

Alright then…

Well, anyways...
* yawns *
Man, walking on foot SUCKS!

You said it!
We would have arrived there by now if we still had the car!

Guess blondes can't drive after all!

* chuckles *
That was a pretty good one, not gonna lie.

Oh please, like you guys could ever drive a functioning car!

I can ride a bicycle!

And I can ride... THE WATER!

Uh, isn't that supposed to be "ride the wind" instead?

* notices Array laughing at him *
Shut up, G.

Whatever you say.
* looks at Array *
Yo Array, how long till we arrive there?

* pulls out a map from his backpack *
Okay, let's see here... We are on the other side of The Mountain That Never Ends, right?

"Mount Neverends" but yeah.

Wow, you REALLY hate that name.

I DO! IT'S A MOUTHFUL, DUDE!
I hate saying it!

Hm... good news, everyone!
We should be there in a few hours if we don't take a break!

That's awesome!

Huh... really thought this adventure would last longer.

Look on the bright side, Bushra!
Once we are back home, us three can go on a bunch more adventures!
* notices something in the distance *
Oh, look guys! Looks like we have reached the end of the mountain!

Phew, good riddance.
Glad it doesn't live up to its name.

Woo hoo! Big win!

YEAH!
* hugs both of them *
Let's take a selfie to celebrate, you two!

Do we have to-

Pleaseeeee?

Yeah Bushra!
It wouldn’t hurt to take one.

Fine. Just this once.

YAY!
* lifts up his phone *
Say cheese!

Cheese!

Fish.

* FLASH *

Awesome memory: achieved!

Yup!

I'm so gonna print this out when we go back home!

Heh, that would be pretty cool.
* takes a breath *
Man, I can't believe we are almost there.
And you two came all the way here just to help poor ol' me.
I can't thank you two enough for it!

It's okay, dude.
We are just helping out a friend.

It... feels great to know that people actually care about you, you know?

Yeah, dude.
We have been all there once before! Right, Bushra?

I guess…

T-thanks mates!

As the trio continued walking, Array suddenly noticed a shadowy figure hiding in the woods. Array could tell from the lighting that the figure was carrying a sack filled with shiny objects. The figure took one of the shiny objects and started digging a hole to plant it. Array shouted at the figure.

HEY LADY!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING INSIDE THE WOODS?!

The purple-haired girl runs further into the woods in response, with no trace of her left in sight. Array was so confused.

Uhm... did you guys see that?

Uh... no?
* holds Array's right hand *

Is the gauntlet making you hallucinate things again?

What, no?!
How could you say that?!

You literally hallucinated pizza with wings after our last fight.

HEY!
They looked real, okay?!
* shakes his head to concentrate *
Come on G, you gotta believe me!
I saw a purple girl run off inside the woods!

Purple girl?
You are not making any sense, buddy.

I saw her with my very own eyes!
We should go after her!

Alright, let's assume what you saw was real.
Where's your proof then?

I-
* still looking at where the figure used to be *
Nevermind, let's continue.

Uh... okay?

* tries to change the topic *
Alrighty, so....
* notices something in the distance *
Yo Array, can you check the map for a second?

Sure.

Is there a town nearby on the map?

Hm… nope.
It's completely filled with green spots.

That's weird... is your map out of date or something?

I… borrowed it from a kind grocery clerk.
Why do you ask?

Cause there's a town right in front of us.

Huh, that's odd.

I know, right?
Perhaps they just forgot to add it.

Yeah, that's fair.

I just assumed there wouldn't be anyone willingly living here because of... sigh.

* chuckles *
Yeah, I get it.
You don't have to say its name.

You mean The Mountain That Never Ends?

…

…

Did I do it again?

…yeah.

Aww…

Is there another way we can take besides entering and exiting that town?

Hard to tell.
The woods might be filled with some of those mutant creatures we encountered so I say we enter that there town.

Works for me.

We really shouldn't spend a lot of time there though, you guys.
I don't want Array's situation to get worse.

* coughs *
Yeah, good idea.

Well you two, brace yourselves for the crowd!

Psst... it can't be THAT bad!

5 minutes later...

It’s that bad.

"HELLO, MPC2!"
"CAN YOU SIGN MY SHIRT, MR. STOKED?!"
"Nice gauntlet, can I buy one?"
"I LOVE EDG-"

Array was horrified by the crowd. He wasn't used to people praising him... or even wanting to interact with him for that matter. The town was giving him horrible flashbacks to the time he spent in Village Low. He thought G would feel the same as him but he looked like he was used to this stuff.

Alright, everyone.
Give our guests some personal space.
They must be tired.

(anxious) THANKS!

Sorry, what?

I- ERM…

It's okay, buddy.
I will take it from here.

O-OKAY!

Hello mister, how is it popping?

Popping?

* fake coughs *
Sorry, my allergies.
So... hello mister...

Survey.

Cool. So uhm... can I ask a few questions?

Sure.

You have an awesome looking town here, Mr. Survey.
May I ask why it isn't on the Perdiah map?

Oh, right.
We started building our town just recently, the map is most likely not up to date.

Thought so.
Usually Sarpo lets us know about these things... oh well.
Did you guys choose a name for your town?

Um… not yet!

Hm…

Meanwhile;

Dude, are you okay?
You seemed pretty stressed out.

So- sorry!
I am just not used to this, G.

That's fine, it's better to let Bushra do his thing instead.

How are you so sure?
In fact, why are you so chill?

We have done this same song and dance with Bushra a bunch of times.
This is just standard stuff for us now.
In fact, we once saved a desert town from a rogue trio of bad guys!

Ooh! That's cool.
Wait... what did they look like?

Well; the bald one had explosives, the lady one looked like she was cosplaying for halloween and their leader had a pretty cool eyepatch.
Why did you ask?

…nothing.

Is there something wrong, Array?
You know you can talk to me anytime about your feelings!

I know, I know.
See, I was just... thinking of telling you something.

Yeah, sure.
Go ahead, dude!

I'm... I'm...

Hello Array and G, how are you doing?

GAH!

Oh, hello Mr....

The name's Mike Survey!
But you can call me Mr. Survey.
We are glad to have you all as guests!
We usually don't get many guests nowadays.

It was our pleasure!
Right, Array?

(flustered) Yea.. yeah!
O- of course!

Quite a fascinating kid.

You could say that.

Uh huh.
* looks at the trio *
You three look like you are hungry.
Mind if you stayed for dinner?

No, thanks.
We just wanted to-
* coughs and falls to the ground *

Ugh...

ARRAY!

Oh my, what’s his problem?

He has a bit of a "radiation" problem.

That sounds awful!
He definitely needs to take a break!

N... no! I just need to stand up-
* holds his chest *
Ugh...

Are you okay, dude?

I- I guess...

We need to rejuvenate, we are staying for dinner!

Bu... but-
We are so close!

No "but"s, buddy.

* helps him get up with G *
We are staying for dinner and that's that!

Okay…

The trio followed Mr. Survey around the town as he showed off the beauty of their town. There were so many interesting-looking statues all around the town. While G and Bushra didn't give much thought to their surroundings, Array was skeptical. The head part of the statue reminded him of something, but he could not pinpoint exactly what it was. Their little trip came to an end when they stopped right in front of a small wooden house.

And… here we are!

Woah, nice looking house, Mr. Survey!

Thank you! This is our honorary guest house!
Our wonderful guests usually stay here until we let them "peacefully" part ways.

That's awesome to hear.

While you three help your friend get inside the house, I will prepare your dishes.

Thank you so much!

No problem!

Take care.

The trio enters the house and starts looking around inside. It was a simple house built from wood with a bunch of bookshelves inside to keep the guests company. Despite being sick, Array was really excited. He loved reading books, so this was perfect for him! He tried to pick up one of the books, but the books were glued together. G helped him as they separated the books. Array picked up one of the books that interested him and started reading it while Team Bushra talked about their plans when they will go back home. The book Array was reading was about the very town they were staying in. It had construction plans and included some notes from past town mayors and so much more fun trivia facts! But wait... If there were past town mayors, how was the town not on the map?

Dinner’s ready!

Mr. Survey enters the room with a bunch of plates. To their surprise, Team Bushra both got their favorite food on their plates. But Array didn't. He only had rice and a few bagels on his plate.

This is amazing!!!
How did you know what our favorite foods were, Mr. Survey?

Oh, it was just a hunch.

* tries to talk while his mouth was full *
This fish is SO GOOD, holy crap!
You all definitely gotta tell me how you guys cook your fish, this is just...
* performs the okay gesture *
Chefs kiss!

* smiles * Thank you so much.

Of course, we will tell you all about it!

G looks at Array and notices that he wasn't eating his food and instead reading the book.

Yo Array, are you gonna eat or what?

Hm…

Come on, dude!
They worked so hard on these, at least one bite!

Sure…

Array takes one bite out of the bagels and continues reading his book. As he went further and further in the book, he saw something so terrifying that it made him drop the book to the ground in an instant.

GUYS, THEY ARE LYING...
* holds his head *
They are... Ugh... why am I feeling sleepy?

Array looked at Team Bushra as both of them fell to sleep in front of him. The last thing he saw before losing his unconscious was Mr. Survey's smug grin.

A few hours later, inside MPC2 headquarters, nighttime. Artender was looking around MPC headquarters for his kids after he was done checking up on Hood. It was the middle of the night, so he didn't want to shout in case they were sleeping. And sure enough, he found both of them sleeping in front of the TV. They were hugging each other while sitting on the sofa. Artender shed a tear and went to grab

a blanket for his kids. After putting on the blanket, he sat right next to them to watch some TV. It has been a long time since he properly sat down and spent some quality alone time. Even a few hours of regular TV would do, he thought. He turned on one of the news channels to find some traces of the trio. When he went to grab a soda from the fridge, he overheard something that caught his attention. The news reporter was talking about strange, gigantic crystals popping out of strange places. Artender was getting worried; he hoped all MPC2 members would return to base so that they could investigate these weird crystals. Heck, they might have even encountered the crystals themselves. He just hoped they were all okay.

Ugh... wh- where am I?

Array looks around to see that he was chained up alongside Team Bushra. There were a bunch of hooded figures patiently waiting for something to happen. When Array looked down to the ground, he audibly gulped. They were in a ritual and they were about to be sacrificed.

G- guys! Wake up!

Wh.. what-
* looks around *
WHAT IS GOING ON?!

(half sleepy) Shut up, G... you were supposed to feed the rat today....

Array starts shaking the chains, causing Bushra to wake up.

GAH! WHAT IN THE WORLD-
WHERE ARE WE?!

I don't know?!

Quick, use your hammer to break the chains, G!

* starts grunting in pain *
I'm trying to summon my hammer but it isn't working!

There is no water nearby either!

Mates, please relax-
Let's just keep calm and try to find other solutions before-

Before what?

And there he was. Mr. Survey slowly walked towards the group with a new outfit to boot. This wasn't just any outfit however. It was a modified version of the generic hoodster clothes with an opposite color palette. Team Bushra couldn't believe what they were seeing.

Bu- but, HOW?!

Isn't it obvious, you MPC scum!?
We have been investigating your little operation ever since Hood disappeared!
Speaking of whom…

Mr. Survey suddenly pulls out his sword and threatens the group with it.

What happened to her?

We won't tell you.

Oh, really now?

Mr. Survey suddenly hits Array's right arm with his foot.

AGH!

ARRAY!
STOP THAT!

Oh, I'm SOOOO scared of a chained up midget... NOT.
* looks at Bushra *
Now... would you like to explain what happened to Hood?

(THINK, THINK!)
(I have to buy us some time until the other two figure something out!) Hm... say. Why don't you tell us more about your operation before we inevitably get sacrificed?

HAH, he thinks he is smart
I'm not here to play around, Bushra.
Tell me where she is!

You are right, Survey.
But consider this, wouldn't you love to explain your awesome plan to us?

Why would I?

It seems like you all put on a ton of effort to it.
If I were you, I would have gushed all about it. You know?

* smiles *
FINALLY, SOMEONE GETS IT!
You rarely see people appreciating their enemies' plans nowadays!

* chuckles while Array and G looked at him all confused *
I know right?! I would love to hear about it!

If that's the case…
When Hood mysteriously disappeared, the remaining hoodsters escaped from the battlefield with me as their leader.
There was nowhere for us to run!
The last place we could run off to was The Mountain That Never Ends.
We lost a lot of our comrades on our way there...
But after a few months, one of us found a way out of that hellhole.
And then, we started building a town here where no one could find us.
But when someone DID find us... let's just say, we sacrificed them to our magnificent savior, XTRESS!
And thus, Town Tress was born!
Once we sacrifice enough souls, we WILL become one with HIM.
And when he finds us and sees what we have done for him... well, you can figure out the rest.

Wow.

Wow, indeed.

B- but, we killed Xtress!
He is gone now, you guys don't have to continue his legacy anymore!

No, he isn't.
When weird blob monsters started appearing in our town, we knew he was still out there.

That's because I was fighting him in Nor Plane, dummy!

You… you don’t have any proof of that!

Starting lose your cool, aren’t you?

Speaking of which… I knew I recognized your voice from somewhere!
You want your time in the spotlight. Don't you, Array?

What-

NO!

I knew you seemed familiar the moment I saw you with these scumbags.
Why are you helping them, Array?
You don’t belong with them, just embrace your past!

* tears up *
S... SHUT UP!

I don't think I will.

I'm... NO! YOU DON’T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ME!
* his gauntlet starts glowing *
I'M NOT THE PERSON YOU THINK I AM!

As the gauntlet started flickering lights everywhere, it suddenly created a strong wind, which caused every hoodster to fall to the ground, breaking the chains as a result. Team Bushra could not believe what they were seeing; both of them had never seen Array this angry before.

W-WHAT?!
T-THAT THING HAS POWERS?!

I DON'T NEED TO EXPLAIN MYSELF TO YOU OR ANYONE!
* picks up a nearby boulder and throws it at him *
GET OUT OF MY LIFE!

URGH!
* calls in some of the nearby hoodsters *
Don't just stand there you morons! Help me!

While the hoodsters were running off, Array was burning down every single building inside the town. The hoodsters who tried to protect Mr. Survey were mercilessly killed by Array. Team Bushra had to stop him before it became worse.

What are we gonna do?!

We have to stop Array before the radiation starts hurting him again! Bushra quickly looks around and notices a path leading to the town's exit which was guarded by a few hoodsters.

I will take care of these hoodsters while you get Array!

Alright!
* holds Bushra's shoulders *
Good luck out there, dude.

Same goes to you, smelly forest monster.

* smiles *
Never change, man.

As G ran towards Array, Bushra was fighting off a bunch of hoodsters all by himself. Even though he was struggling, he still managed to come out on top! They were very protective over their statues for some reason as well. When Bushra looked at the statues more closely, he realized that their heads were shaped like Xtress'. It all made more sense now.

Meanwhile, G stopped Array right before he killed another hoodster with his gauntlet.

ARRAY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

I'M BURNING THIS WHOLE PLACE DOWN!

YOU CAN'T DO THAT!
These are still people here that can join the side of good!

* looks at his gauntlet and then looks at G *
I'm not taking any chances, G.
* raises his right hand to hit the hoodster *
Sayonara, jerk.

G grabbed Array's right arm right before he hit the hoodster. Array tried to attack the hoodster again, but G wasn't letting him. While G was holding his arm, he wasn't strong enough. Array threw G to the ground and killed the hoodster before they could move. Array was furious that Mr. Survey ran away. Before he could chase after them, he looked around to see G still saying his name while lying on the ground. Array looked at his hands and started feeling guilty. He grabbed G and carried him on his shoulder as he looked around to find out where Bushra was. When Bushra saw them, he was confused about why G was unconscious. But Bushra was clearly aware that Array didn't want to talk about it. So, he didn't ask him any questions when the three left what remained of the town.

A few hours pass by without no one saying a word. It was morning again. Array was dreading the moment G woke up from his injuries...

Ugh... What happened?

...

...

* realizes that Bushra was carrying him *
Bushra, put me down.

Array was scared of G's tone. Array didn't see him THIS angry before.

Array, what was all that?

I-

Why did you kill all those people like they were nothing?
You didn't tell me anything about your incentive to kill before!
This isn't adding up-

G, please understand-

Understand what?!
I thought your fear of the town was just because of Village Low but it's clear to me that it isn't!
I thought you were honest with me after all that we went through!

* tries to hide his tears *
F-fine. I know when I'm not wanted anymore.
The sooner we get my gauntlet fixed, the sooner I can go back to my old life in the woods!
* starts walking away with the map *
Just… just follow me, I will let you know when we are there.

(Sigh)
* looks at Bushra *
Thanks for not interfering, dude.

No problem, buddy.
Although... I feel like you were a bit too harsh in some places.

...yeah, you are right.
I was just... so frustrated that he didn't tell me anything about the time when we were split up!
I just want him to be honest with me!

That's fine, G.
Just... maybe talk to him again when we are done with this, okay?

...yeah.

The trio continued walking down the last path of their journey. Array walked in front of Team Bushra to not interact with them. Bushra could clearly see that Array was hurting from the inside; both figuratively and literally. After an hour of non-stop walking, there it was. Temple Skulled in all of its glory. G could not believe they were finally here after all their adventures together. Even though Array and G were angry at each other, G still wanted the best for his friend.

We are finally here. Huh.

So... what are we gonna do now?

Now, we are gonna play by the temple's rules.
* notices three symbols on the temple's door *
Strange.
* deciphers the ancient text *
It says here that...

Array stops reading the text. Even though he didn't say anything, G realized that it wasn't good news judging by Array's shocked expression.

It says "what", buddy?

...that everyone who wants to enter the temple has to tell their darkest secret to each other.

That's... ominous.
I expected some sort of actual challenge.

Me too.
But I can start if you two don't mind.

Sure.

…

Before I met with G, I actually wanted to play a guitar.
I even went to a course because of it!

Oh? And that's dark because?

* chuckles *
I was kicked out because of my horrible skills!

Oh man, you would have been an awesome guitarist.

Maybe. But I'm fine with being a fisher instead, it fits me more.

The three look back as one of the symbols starts lighting up. They were on the right track.

Do you want to go next, Array?

…

Come on, man!
I'm sorry, what I said was too harsh but I was just so mad that you weren't being honest with me!

…

Urgh… fine.
After I started living in the woods, I ate pine cones to survive for a brief time.

Ugh, that sounds NASTY!

I know right?!
I started brushing my teeth everyday after that.
It was horrible!

The symbol in the middle started lighting up. Now, it was Array's turn.

Array, please.
We are so close.

Yeah, just get it all out buddy.
You will be free of this gauntlet's radiation at last!

…

Please…

Suddenly, Array's holds G's hands.

G... PLEASE promise me that our relationship won't change after this, okay?!

O- okay?

I-

Yes?

I... I used to be a-

Before Array could finish his sentence, the trio heard sounds of a car

engine approaching them. They also heard sounds of trees falling down to the ground by an ungodly force. When they saw who showed up, they were left speechless.

THE RASCALS?!

Um... boss?
We have got company!

Like what company?!
Gaming company, music company...

BLAST IT ALL!
* tries to calm down *
We will just paralyze them until we get what we came for!
Joyce, throw one of those stunning potions at them!

...holding company, subsidiary company...
Oh, okay!
Hold on tight, little boys!

Before Joyce could throw her potion, Xtress arrived from his long hiatus and he wasn't alone either. He was commanding a bunch of mutant animals.

XTRESS?!

Oh, dear.

HAHAHAHAH!
AM I INTERRUPTING SOMETHING?!

YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD!

THANK YOU FOR BRINGING ME BACK TO PERDIAH, FISH!

Xtress disappears and then appears behind Bushra.

GAH!

LUCKILY FOR YOU... I AM NOT HERE TO TAKE MY REVENGE!
AT LEAST NOT YET!

We won't let you enter the temple, Xtress!

BIG TALK FOR A GUY YOUR SIZE!

* hits Xtress with his hammer *
I was trying to be nice!

HNRGH!!

We can’t enter the temple until we get rid of these bozos.
We have to help him, Array!

You are right!

Before they could reach Xtress, they were surrounded by mutant creatures.

Alright, change of plans.
We first gotta get rid of these mutants first.

Yeah!

Not so fast!

Wha-
* gets hit with a Blinding Potion *
OH, COME ON!

Sleepy tighty!

Don't worry Bushra, I got this!

How are you so sure?!

Uh... I fought with them before.

* still not seeing anything *
WHA-

Long story.

I knew I recognized you from somewhere!
Murray, start planting your bombs.

B.. but- boss, we might destroy the temple in the process.

Never mind.
Capture the blonde kid this instant!

Before the Rascals could come close to him, he punched the ground, causing the Rascals to drop the ground.

ENOUGH!

WHAT?!

* takes a deep breath *
Look. If Xtress enters that temple, he will kill all of us later!

Didn't they try to kill you before?!

... yes. But, this is dangerous for all of us!
So, I say-

Are you proposing a temporary truce?

Basically yeah.

Hm...
* raises his hand for a handshake *
Then you are on, Mr. Array.

The same could be said to you, Mr. Markus.

I can't believe this is happening.

Meh, ya get used to it.

UGH!

HAHAHAHAHA!

I can't... let you....

AWW... IS THE LITTLE REPTILE NOT STRONG ENOUGH? WHEN IS YOUR POWERED UP FORM GONNA SHOW UP, EH?

I... I don't know!

HOW UNFORTUNATE… WHAT A SAD WAY TO GO OUT!

Xtress called in all of his mutants to attack G but they weren't here. If so...where were they?

WHAT…

Before Xtress could comprehend what was happening, both Array and Markus hit him in the face. G was shocked, to say the least. He saw Bushra running towards him.

What's… happening?

I will explain it to you all later.
Now, let's focus on defeating Xtress once and for all!

You got it!

NO... I WILL NOT-

* throws the stun potion at Xtress *
Shut up, ya' hottie!

ARGH!

???

Don't mind her, bald one!
* looks Murray in the eyes and shows him a drawing of a canon *
I want you to build this!
Can you do that for me?

I-I could!
Yeah!

Alright eye patch man, both of us don't have any special tools we can use so let's distract the old buffoon!

Works for me!

* points at Joyce *
And you… you can support G, I guess.

K, lad.

NO!
* breaks out of the stun potion's effects *
I WILL NOT LOSE AGAIN!

Big talk for someone with a small head!

WILL RIP YOUR LIMBS OFF JUST FOR THA-
* an arrow hits him on his shoulder *
ARGH, WHO WAS THAT?!

Sorry, old wizard person.
It's just business.

I WILL SHOW YOU WHAT'S BUSINESS-

* hits Xtress with his hammer *
Array, you better hurry up!

NO! I WILL NOT BE STOPPED BY THESE IDIOTIC KIDS AGA-

* throws another Stun potion *
Nyeh-nyeh! Stop talking!

INSUFFERABLE BRAT!

Mah friends call me Joyce, actually.

It’s finished!

Thanks, bald mate!
* gets inside the canon *
Shoot me when I give command!

Alright!

I'm running out of arrows, the kid better speed up!

I hope so too!

HEY, GOOD-DOERS!
ARE YOU DONE?
I'M RUNNING OUT OF JUICE!

ARRAY, PLEASE!
* gets grabbed by Xtress by the neck *
GAH!

NO MORE RUNNING!

And....NOW!

As soon as Array shouted, Murray used the canon he just built to shoot Array towards Xtress. Array then punched him in the gut with his gauntlet hand. After that powerful punch, the sky turned orange because of the dust. Team Bushra quickly ran towards Array to see if he was alright.

ARRAY?!
WHERE ARE YOU?!

G! OVER HERE!

* coughs *
Hi, guys!

Array...
* sits down and holds Array's right hand *
Are you-

That was pretty dumb, right?

* nervously chuckles *
You could say that.

Heh, to be honest... I didn't think I would make it at all!
* looks around *
Is he-

Hopefully.

(Sigh)
At least you are okay now.

Yeah....
* coughs *
The radiation still hurts though.

Don't worry, we will heal you up after we deal with the Rascals!

Did we-

Yes, Murray.
We killed Xtress.

YIP YIP, HOORAY!
We are gonna be in history books!

Will we though-

Ssh, let her have this one.

Thanks for the help you three but unfortunately, only one of the teams can have what's inside the temple.

Well, shucks.
So much for the truce.

Before the two factions could fight each other, they turned their backs as they heard a monsterous voice just behind them.

YES…

What in the-

THANKS FOR REMINDING ME REPTILE... TO DO **THIS!**

With just one word, G unknowingly let chaos unfold right in front of him. From inside the dust clouds, two red eyes emerged as all three of the rascals started floating in place like their souls had been tampered with. G couldn't believe what he was seeing, but Bushra was aware of what was about to happen. Their clothes and eyes slowly turned red as all three of them started slowly walking towards them. It looked like they were all possessed by Xtress himself.

* tries to cheer the team *
Uh... at least we are gonna be fighting the Rascals still, right guys?

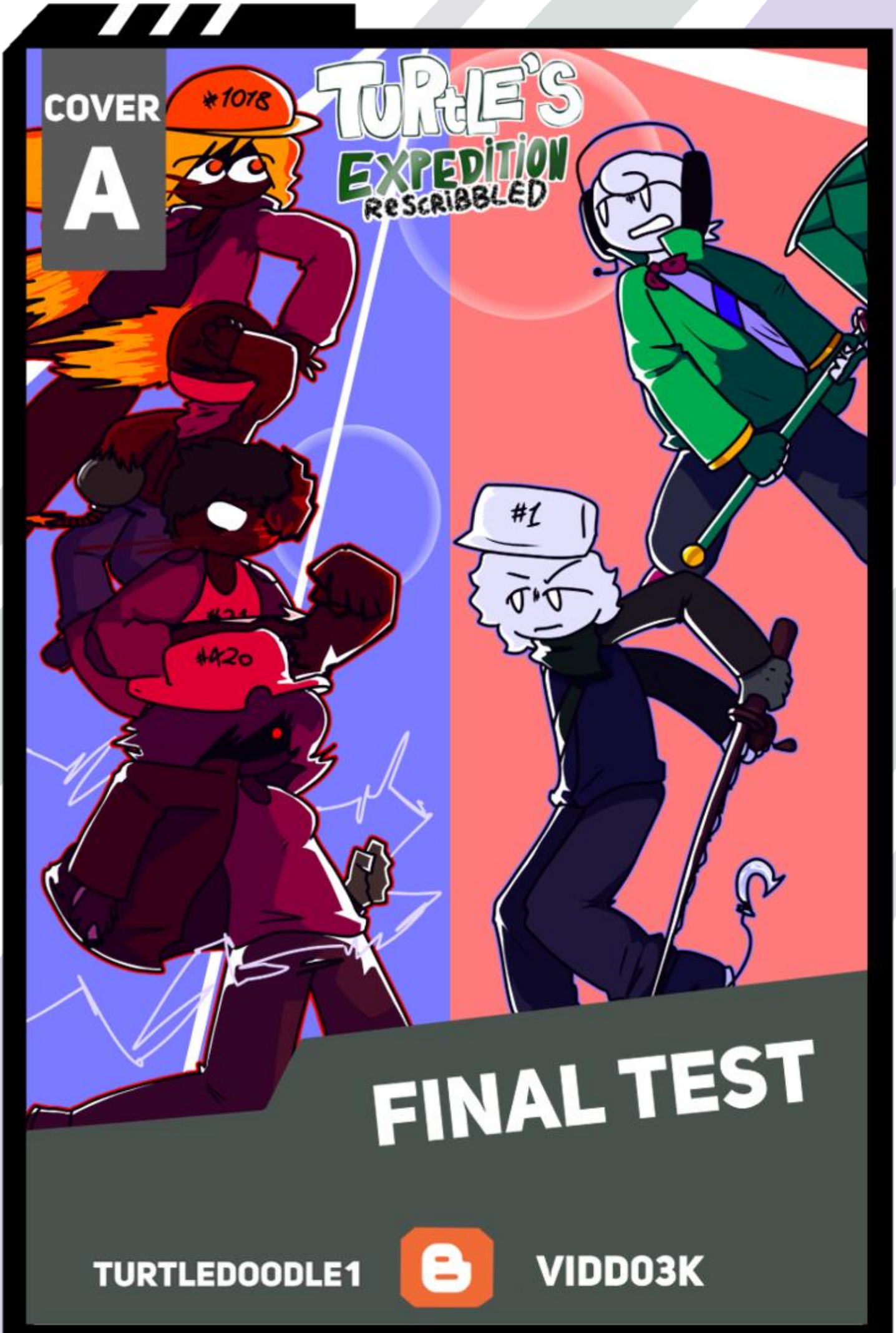
(scared) I suppose?
3 on 3 shouldn't be too hard… I hope.

R- right, Array?

No response. The second G looked at Array, his heart dropped. Array was standing in place lifelessly, just like the rest of the

Rascals. There was nothing he could do but stare at the former shell of his friend. He realized that they were outnumbered as Array walked towards the Rascals to join their side.

He was a hoodster, just like them.


COVER
A
TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
RESCRIBBLED
#1018
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FINAL TEST
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COVER

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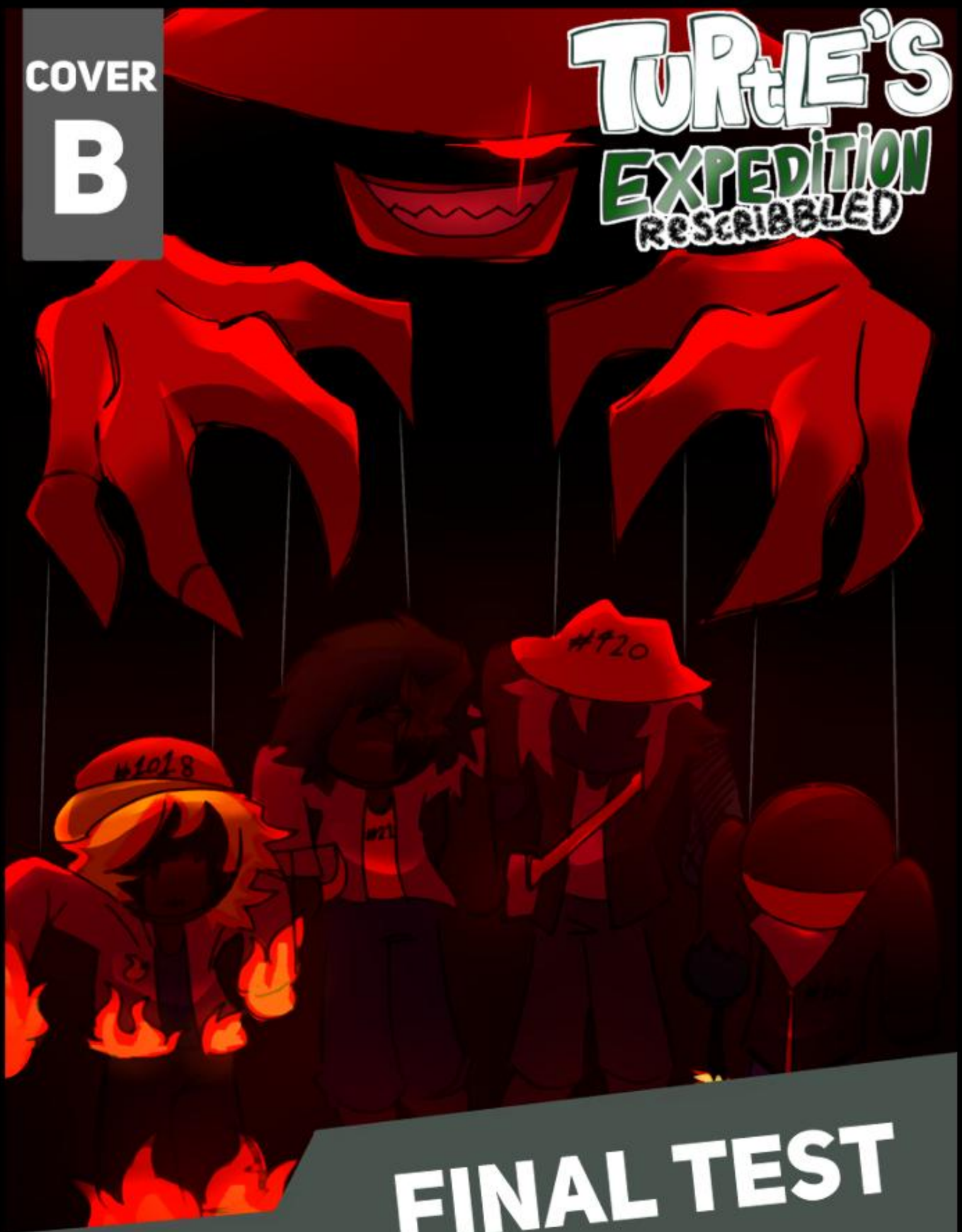
TURTLE'S EXPEDITION RESCRIBBLED



FINAL TEST

TURTLEDOODLE1 SOHEKUN

CHAPTER 23: FINAL TEST

A-Array?!
You… you were a hoodster all this time?!

SILENCE, REPTILE.

GAH!

"Array" starts walking towards them, which causes G to lose his balance. Bushra grabbed G by the shoulders before he fell to the ground.

Wh- what's going on?!
What did you do to him?!

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW?

All four of them took one step forward, which horrified Team Bushra.

I HAVE TO THANK YOU FOR THIS, REPTILE.

YOU KNOW A LOT MORE STUFF THAN YOU LET ON.

I DID NOT EXPECT YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, TO HELP ME ACHIEVE A CLEAN VICTORY!

* chuckles *
PLUS, I CAN USE THESE VESSELS FOR WHATEVER I WANT! WOULDN'T YOU AGREE, "G"?

I-

Now, hold on just a second!
* pulls out his fishing rod *
We won't let you enter that temple!

* summons his hammer *
Y- yea!

* starts laughing like a maniac *
THAT'S RICH...

DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU TWO CAN STOP ME?!

YOU ARE TOO WEAK.

AND PATHETIC!

Oh, really now?
Did you forget the time we beat you at your little game?

THAT’S IRRELEVANT.

Heh, figures.

Suddenly, "Markus" grabs Bushra by the neck, causing him to drop his fishing rod.

GAK!

NOT SO SMUG NOW, ARE YOU?

Let him go!

G lifts his hammer and swings it towards "Markus". But his attack was blocked by none other than "Array".

No-

WHAT'S THE MATTER?
TOO SCARED TO HURT YOUR FRIEND?

* trying to breathe *
G! Throw my fishing rod somewhere far away!

O-On it!

PSSST! WHAT A LAUGH!
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO WITH THAT?
THROW IT AT US?

* picks up the fishing rod *
Something you can't possibly think of in a million years.

YOU ARE TESTING MY PATIENCE!
* raises his hand to command the Rascals *
STOP THAT BRAT!

Come here guys... just a little closer... CATCH!

The Xtress soldiers watch as the fishing rod gets flung towards the woods.

HAH! WHAT A MORON!
WHAT IS THAT SUPPOSED TO-
* automatically starts chasing after the fishing rod *
WHAT?! WHAT SORCERY IS THIS?!

NO!
* tries to stop his body from moving *
GO BACK, YOU USELESS VESSELS!

NOT LIKE THIS!

“Markus” drops Bushra and follows the fishing rod as well much to Xtress’ anger.

NO, NO! YOU STUPID LITTLE- ARGH!

G takes advantage of this situation and runs towards the barely breathing Bushra.

* reaches out his hand *
Need a hand?

S- sure...
* coughs *
That was... way too close for comfort...

Dude, I can't believe that trick still works.

You know what they say; Never doubt a fisherman.

* frowns *
You just had to ruin the moment, didn't you?

* smiles *
Maybe, maybe not.

Alright, we don't have much time left until they come back... so what's our plan?

Hm... you have your hammer and there doesn't seem to be any water nearby...

* looks at the truck the Rascals brought with them *
Unless...

Unless what?

* points at the truck *
That truck might have water inside of it!

How do you know that?

... I don't.
But it’s the best we got!

... fair enough.
* summons his hammer and prepares to strike *
I hope this works!

With Bushra's command, G hits the front side of the truck as hard as he can with his hammer.

Did it... work?

Bushra looks around the truck and sees a small water leak.

Good enough.

Alright then.

You might want to stay away in case this thing blows up all over our faces.

If you say so.
* looks at the woods *
Hm...

Something wrong, G?

I know we have to fight them, but...

But what, G?

A- Array... He is...

* puts his hand on G's shoulder *
Look, I know this is hard for you.

NO, YOU DON'T GET IT!
I... I can't fight Array!

But he is not Array right now.

But-

Listen. If we get rid of Xtress for good, we can get him back.
Just focus right now, okay?

Okay…

Thank you.
* notices the Xtress soldiers and takes a deep breath *
Now... we hide and wait.

YOU WILL BOTH PAY FOR THIS HUMILIATION!

I WILL NOT BE TREATED LIKE A JOKE!

YOU HEAR ME?!

WHERE ARE YOU?!

Right here!

Bushra suddenly throws a rock towards “Murray” and runs away.

ARGH! HEY!
* transforms his right hand into a cannon *
YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS WITH YOUR BLOOD!

Yeah, yeah.
You are not really scary with that body, you know?

* his eyes start twitching *
OH, REALLY?!

BET YOU DIDN'T EXPECT-
* throws a potion at Bushra *
THIS!

Bushra moves back a few steps as he stops the potion mid air with his water powers.

I did, actually.

* transforms his left hand to a crossbow *
YOU WILL NOT WIN!

* realizes he was cornered *
Crud.

JUST DIE ALREADY!

Suddenly, G appears and blocks all the oncoming arrows by spinning his hammer in front of them.

I'M THROUGH WITH YOU!
* raises his hand *
ALL OF YOU, ATTACK THEM AT ONCE!

Of course…

It was total chaos. The possessed Rascals were constantly shooting projectiles at Team Bushra while they were running for their lives. It reminded G of something he experienced a long time ago...

WHAT'S THE PLAN NOW?

I DON'T KNOW!
* catches all the projectiles mid air at the last second *
YOU THINK OF SOMETHING!

O- OKAY!
I-I think I have an idea!

What is it?

I noticed that Xtress could talk through them one at a time.
So I’m gonna try to weaken the bald one.
Perhaps Xtress will let go of his body once he realizes he can't do anything with him!

Okay... decent idea.
* punches “Joyce” with his fist *
Where do I come in this plan?

You can cover for me while I make a run for it!

* catches “Markus”’ arrows mid air *
You got it! Now, GO!

G runs towards Xurray while dodging all the bombs he was throwing at him.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE PLANNING, REPTILE BUT IT WON'T WORK!

G doesn’t respond with any remark.

AWW, ARE YOU SCARED?

Then, out of nowhere, G ran behind “Murray” and held his hand in a reverse clamp position.

RAGH! STUPID WEAK BODY!
CAN'T... MOVE...

Bushra, I got one of them!
Come here!

Awesome!
* throws one of the potions back at “Joyce” *
I am coming!

NO! I WON'T LET YOU-
I WON'T...

Suddenly, Murray’s skin color goes back to normal.

Ugh... What happened?
* looks behind him *
Uh... sir?

Bushra, let him go!
My guess was correct, the bald guy is free!

HEY! That’s not my name!

That's great to hear, now we know how we can rescue them-

NO!
* points at Murray as he starts floating in place again *
EMBRACE YOUR PAST, X-MURRAY!

WHAT THE-
* suddenly gets launched away by an explosion *
URGH!

I’M BACK ON THE LEASH ONCE AGAIN, REPTILE!
* smiles *
DID YOU THINK IT WAS THAT EASY?!

* kicks Murray away with his foot *
Leave him alone!

GAH!

* hits X-Markus with the back of his arm *
This is absolute chaos!
We can't go on for much longer!

* trying to block the incoming arrows with a wooden plank *
I agree with that.
I don't think I will be able to keep the "Squirrels" here for much longer!

* takes a breath and looks at X-Array *
I will try to do something drastic.
Please cover for me, dude.

Alright. Please be careful, G!
Don’t do anything stupid!

Got it!

Xtress was getting rather confused; what was Team Bushra trying to do? It looked like they were trying to reach Array in the midst of all the chaos. He didn't fully regain his powers just yet; he had to stall for just a bit more time. He ordered the Rascals to keep them at bay, but it wasn't enough. G was already here, standing in front of him.

…HELLO THERE.

* holding his hammer *
Hello, Xtress.

MISS YOUR FRIEND?

…

YOU KNOW, HE CARED ABOUT YOU A LOT.
MORE THAN YOU EVER DID FOR HIM...

What... What do you mean?

X-Array coughs and his voice changes to Array's.

He never got to tell you his feelings when you two were young.
And now...
* grabs G by the neck *
...he will never get to tell you.

* trying to breath *
Ugh... please, stop!
Array, I know you are… I know you are in there somewhere!
Fight him!

* notices the tears in G's eyes *
Peh. Just imagine the newslines, G!
"Local hero killed the hands of his loved one.".
How pathetic.
* looks at G directly and changes his voice to his own *
IT WOULD BE QUITE A SHAME IF...
* the gauntlet starts burning with fire *
...YOU DIED BY THE HANDS OF YOUR LO-
* the fire stops as he holds the gauntlet in pain *
WHAT IS THIS... THING?!

IT'S... HURTING ME!

* tries to smile*
Not so smug now, are you?

SHUT UP, REPTILE!
I CAN FIGURE IT OUT HOW TO USE THIS CLUMSY BODY ON MY OWN!

G, I CAN'T KEEP THEM AT BAY FOR MUCH LONGER!
* traps Xrray with his water powers *
DO WHAT YOU GOTTA DO!

THE PAIN… I CAN’T STOP THE PAIN!

* whispers *
I'm... so sorry, Array.

WHAT?!

Before X-Array could stop him, G grabbed X-Array’s right hand and pushed it towards X-Array’s chest, which also made the gauntlet flicker lights everywhere all over again.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, YOU IMBECILE?!
I- I CAN'T GET OUT!
NO! I WON’T LOSE CONTROL!
I WILL NOT- ARGHHHHHHHHHH!

And just like that, a flash of light covered the whole scene. When Team Bushra opened their eyes, they noticed a red smoke appearing

on top of the 4's head. The smoke later disappeared into thin air. Their appearances turned back to normal as a result. The Rascals fell to the ground while Array fell into G's arms.

Did- did we actually-

No. He is still out there, he ran away... again.

Ugh... my KNEES!
ARGH! SCREW THIS STUPID TEMPLE, I DIDN'T COME HERE TO GET MIND CONTROLLED BY THAT FREAK!
* looks at his crew *
JOYCE, MURRAY, GET UP!

* holding his right arm in pain *
S-Sure, boss…

(half awake) Ugh… my head…
Hurry up, Murray.
Mamma needs her beauty sleep...

Team Bushra wanted to stop them, but they were too tired after their battle with Xtress. Murray fixed the exhaust system of the truck, and the trio went their merry way. Bushra was frustrated for letting them get away while G was focused on... him.

A- Array?
* lightly hits him in the face *
Please...

…

Array, PLEASE!
* repeatedly hits him *
PLEASE!

G…

* starts tearing up *
No... no, no, no, NO!

G, I'm so sorry.

NO! I- I CAN'T LOSE HIM AGAIN, BUSHRA!

…G?

A- Array?!

HE’S ALIVE!

ARRAY!
* hugs him *
I- I'M SO SORRY FOR EVERYTHING, I SHOULDN'T HAVE MADE YOU UPSET!

I MISSED YOU SO MUCH!

* hugs him in return *
I missed you too, G.
* tries to stand up *
But it's cool. Really.
It... was my fault.
I am so sorry for not being honest with you guys from the beginning.

I can’t lie… yeah, it definitely would have helped.

I know, I know…

So... you were a hoodster this whole time?

(Sigh) ... yes.
Yes, I was.

But... why?!
Why did you become a hoodster in the first place?!

I didn't have much of a choice, really…

"When the landslide happened, I was too slow to save myself. My right hand was crushed under the rubble. All I could do was shout for G's help. But he couldn't hear me. But I could hear him mourning for my apparent death. I was heartbroken. I was losing blood with every passing second, until Carlos and his folks found me. They rescued me, but in return, they took me prisoner in their village. They put me in a cube-shaped cell where everyone passing by could

see my misery. They treated my right hand, but it wasn't enough. The damage was too severe, and they left my hand in a useless state. The townsfolk insulted my appearance, threw tomatoes at me, and barely gave me food to survive. I didn't know what to do with my life after that. I admit, I did steal stuff from that village. I did regret ever doing that in the first place after my punishment. But I didn't expect them to keep me locked in there as long as they did. A few years passed by until **they** found me.

* rings the town bell *
Morning, Array.

…morning.

How was yesterday?

Awful, as usual.

* chuckles *
Just what I wanted to hear.

You are not funny, you know?

Peh, says the one inside the cell.
You are lucky that we are going easy on you.

…

That’s what I thought.
Ever since Carlos mysteriously left the town, we thought of letting you rot here for the insufferable brat you are!
…but, we can’t do that.
At least, not right now.

…

Never mind that.
What do you think today's breakfast is?

Hm... chia seeds?

Not even close.

Before the guard could give him his breakfast, both of them heard an alarm go off. They could hear the sounds of running as well. Something was heading toward the town.

What's happening?!

Not your business.
Someone is infiltrating our town!
You stay here, I will be back!

W-WAIT!

The guard suddenly ran off behind a house while Array was left

confused inside his cell. The sounds of an army heading towards the town were getting louder and louder.

W- WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!
* tries to escape *
P- PLEASE TAKE ME WITH YOU! I WILL BE A GOOD KID, I PROMISE!
* holds his stomach *
I... don't want to die...

And then, silence.

After a few hours went by, Array woke up and started looking around at what remained of Town Low. There were no traces of the guard anywhere, or even anyone, for that matter. It was so strange; there was no one left in the town besides him. Where were they? His questions were answered when a single hooded person with a walkie-talkie walked past his cell.

Ma’am, there doesn't seem to be anyone living in this small town.
Let me look around one last time...
* notices Array *
Oh. Nevermind.
There is only one person here and they seem to be inside a jail cell.
What should I do?
* tries to listen *
Uh huh... alright. Sure.
* ends the call *
Alright, little man.
What's your name?

M- my name is Array Thunder.
What... What did you do to them?

What do you mean?
You are literally the only person left in this abandoned town!

Are they... alive-

Who are you talking about?

I-I don't know! It was that g-guard person!

Okay then.
* takes a breath *
What are you doing here all by yourself, little man?

I... I did bad stuff.

Like what?

I stole a bunch of stuff from this town and then... they put me in prison…

(Hm… interesting.)
(Could be useful.)

…and then I lost my f-friend.
I don't know where he went to.
Maybe he's… gone.
Forever.

Hm… say Array.

Our boss Hood wants you to be a part of our little operation.
We are currently recruiting a bunch of people and I think you have great potential in you!
You either come with us or-

No, thanks.
I would rather-
* holds his stomach *
Ugh...

(Sigh) Your other option was staying here for the rest of your life all alone… and starving to death.
I really didn't want to tell you that.

(angry) So? Get me out of here and both of us can abandon this whole operation thing!

I really wish it was that simple…

The figure takes off their hood and looks at Array in the eye.

Look, little man.
As much as I would love to do that... It's risky.
Plus I have a loved one alongside me in this operation as well, I can't simply "run away" from it.

So… you are like me?

Yes, yes.

Will you be… my friend?

Of course.

* still holding his stomach *
Will there be... actual food there?

Yeah. I can promise you that.

…fine. Can you get me out of here, please?

On it.

"And just like that, I was free. Kyle saved me at the perfect time. I was running out of food, and I had to escape from there no matter what the consequences would be. When we arrived there, Kyle helped me out a lot with hoodster work. They were a big help while I was getting used to my new robotic hand. When I asked them if they could replace essential body parts with metal ones, they shooked their head. Telling me no one on Perdiah knew of technology THAT advanced. But anyways, I served Hood with the alias Member #1018, for a few years, with small victories on my resume. But Kyle noticed that I wasn't really happy with being a hoodster but didn't really mind it all that much. I think they also didn't want to stay as hoods. In one of our meetings, Hood showed us an object she created with the materials we collected in our past missions. It was a weird-looking gauntlet. She said it was a last-resort option because of how dangerous it was. Its purpose was to take control of Xtress in case he ever disobeyed us. I really didn't think much of this thing at the time. But as you guys already might have figured out"

Array points at his gauntlet.

"It really never left me. After a while, Hood gave back my life essence because of my high rank (which I never really cared about). All I knew was that it was time to escape from that hellhole."

That night, Array wanted to escape from this wretched place once and for all. He has been carefully planning this ever since he got his life essence back. First, he learned that there was an opening on the back side of the building for rocket ships that closed much later than the other openings. He nicknamed it "The Rocket Opening". He knew that if he quickly sneaked by the other hoodsters and reached them on time, he could escape safely.

He waited until 3 a.m. to make his first move. He listened to the clock chimes until it was time for action. He got up from his bed and quietly opened and closed his door. He had never gone outside the hoodster bases after 12 a.m. before, so it was all new territory for him. Even though he couldn't see around him clearly, he memorized the location of "The Rocket Opening". He walked around for a few minutes without alerting anybody until he reached there. Unfortunately for him, however, he wasn't the only one awake. Array learned it the hard way as he bumped into someone carrying a package filled with coal. And that said person was none other than:

Kyle?!

What are you doing here in the middle of the night, Array?!

Yeah, what are you trying to do?!
Escape from here?!

Y- yes?!

Unbelievable!
Come on sweetheart, let's-

Sssh... wait a second, hon.

B-But!

Please, I know this kid.
I can talk him out of it.

Fine…

Look, Array.
I know what you are trying to do but... don't do it.

Why shouldn't I?!
I'm tired of this life!
I don't want to appease that jerk!

Array, please. We don't want to worship **her** either.
But this is a live or die situation.
* tries to help Array by putting their hands on his shoulders *
Please, don't make this harder than it has to be.

Array hits Kyle's hand in disapproval. It was too late to go back now.

NO, I'M DONE WITH THIS!

THAT’S ENOUGH OF THAT!

* reaches out for the nearby microphone *
TRAITOR SPOTTED IN ROOM 4-9-9!
SEND ALL NEARBY HOODSTERS!

Array tries to push Maizie away with his weak hands but ultimately fails.

Get out of my way, you big jerk!

Sorry, kid.
Hood wouldn't let this go otherwise.

HNRGH! NO!
I'M NOT GOING BACK!

Array tramples Maizie's left foot with his own foot which makes Maizie drop the package. Kyle notices Array running towards the rocket ships.

URGH!
Come on, hon... we can't let him escape.

He doesn't know what he is getting himself into!

* trying to start up one of the rocket ships *
COME ON, COME ON...
Array looks at the entrance at the opposite side of the room and notices both Kyle and Maizie trying to catch up with him.

HONEY, DO SOMETHING!

HOLD ON!

Kyle looks inside the package they were delivering and starts throwing the items inside it while chasing after Array.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

I'm buying the others some time until we can capture him!

* quickly dodges the coal pieces *
LEAVE ME ALONE!

Array continued every button he could see the start the ship.

PLEASE!!!

* picks out a gauntlet from the package *
What the heck, where did this gauntlet come from?!
Isn't it supposed to be with Hood's treasures?

WHO CARES?!
Throw it at him! We can't let him escape!

AHA! I GOT IT!

HERE GOES NOTHING!

Kyle quickly throws the gauntlet towards Array as the entire room gets filled with hoodsters. Array didn't realize that the gauntlet was about to hit him, so he tried to block it with his robotic hand. When the gauntlet got in contact with his robotic hand, it started covering up his robotic hand and causing him immense pain. Maizie takes advantage of this and almost catches up with Array, but it was too late. The rocket ship alongside Array was nowhere to be found. Maizie looked behind her and saw the hoodster army looking around the room all confused.

…crud.

Is something wrong, Number 3?

Y- yes.
Tell Ms. Hood that we had technical difficulties in Room 4-9-9!

And what exactly is that?

…oh.

WHAT HAPPENED HERE, MEMBER #3?!
I heard sounds of a rocket ship going off!

Ma’am, I'm so sorry.
I tried to stop him but-

No "but"s, pumpkin!

Hood notices Kyle looking at Maizie all worried.

YOU! YOU TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED HERE!
OR YOU WON’T LIKE WHAT I WILL DO TO YOUR GIRLFRIEND!

(Gulp)
Ma’am, Member #1018 escaped while we were transporting our remaining packages.

That's… strange.
I always thought that he was a loyal one... oh, well.
* looks at Maizie *
Anything else happened?

We tried to stop him by throwing the stuff we had but we found the gauntlet you were bragging about inside of it.

... don't tell me he took it with him.

…

GAH! YOU MORONS!

Ma’am, please have mercy on us!
Y-You said the gauntlet was in its testing phase. And we saw Array in pain before he escaped so he might die anyway without us doing anything!

... good point, Member #2.
I did not think of that.

Still… you two disappointed me.
I won’t tolerate another failure by you two. Ever again.
* looks at the hoodster army *
Okay, all of you can go back to your beds except...
* points at Member #45 *
YOU, Member #45!

Yes, ma’am?

* looks at the other hoodsters *
And if anyone else decides to play traitor...
* smiles *
I will personally make you pay for it.
Now... MOVE OUT!

Hood left the scene alongside all the hoodsters inside the opening... except Member #2 and Member #3.

G-Good thinking, hon.

No problem, sweetie.
* kisses her on the cheek *
I tried my best.

You sure did...
* looks around the facility to check if anyone else was left in the room *
Sigh, these plans of hers are becoming worse and worse!
First, she rejected the MPC infiltrating idea and now THIS?!
I am so certain that she won't be able to find create another one of those gauntlets either! ARGH! I can't stand it anymore!

Look, hon.

We are almost done with this mess, we just have to keep on fighting for a bit longer!

You are right... as usual...

Alright Mazes, I will see you in a flash!
I'm gonna get us coffee!
* kisses her *
Love you!

Love you too, hon!
* watches as Kyle leaves the room, leaving her as the only person inside *
I will make Hood pay for everything she has done to us... Mark my words!

"To be honest, I don't know what happened to those two after I left. I was thankfully able to escape, even with the gauntlet now stuck in my hand. I tried to get it off for months, but I failed each and every single time. After getting off their radar, I moved to the woods to find G. I thought he would have also started to live in the woods after the landslide incident, but it turns out I was wrong. I started building a treehouse far away for us two.”

“I protected that little house all my life for so many years. Hoodsters, regional guardians, MPC members—all of them I wanted to show you that I cared a lot about you, G. But unfortunately, the Rascals blew up our house. I was devastated. With it gone, I had no idea what to do anymore. I traveled all around Perdiah to find somewhere else to live, but to my surprise, I found G in the process. I thought that if I didn't say anything and acted normal, you guys would accept me for who I am and not for the person I was, but it didn't work. And now, you guys hate me as well and I don't... I don't know what to do..."

Array closes his eyes with his hands.

I'm so sorry for everything, G...
You deserve to be with a better person than me...

* sits next to him *
Hey, dude. It's... okay.

* wiping his tears *
Really?

Yeah, I get what you are saying.
I'm so happy that you are with us now!
That’s not the problem.
I just wished you were honest with us from the start.

I- I couldn't risk it.
I saw what happened to other rouge hoodsters, they either went into hiding or they continued their life of crimes.
I didn't want to be locked up again... I wanted to be with you for so long that I was paranoid of everything surrounding me.
* coughs up blood *
I truly regret everything that I have done...

I trust you, Array.
But please, don't lie to us again.

I won't, that's a promise.

* hugs Array *
Thank you, Array.

Heh, no... Thank YOU, G.
So much.

Bushra was watching the two while they were having a heart-to-heart conversation. He didn't want to interrupt them. He was a lot more trusting of Array now, but he was still thinking about one thing Array said in particular. Since Array chose to rebel against Hood and her legacy, could there be other hoodsters exactly like him? Perhaps the bald Rascal was also the same... His thoughts were suddenly halted when he noticed the final symbol on the temple starting to light up.

Array did it.

Yo, nerds!
* points at the temple *
We can enter the temple now.

Woah… I can’t believe it’s all going to be over now.

Yep!
* holds Array’s hand *
Come on, let’s get you healed up!

* blushes *
O-Okay!

Come on, Bushra!
You don't wanna miss this!

I sure don’t!

The three entered the temple and started looking around. It was empty.

That's… underwhelming, I thought it would be more advanced.

Yeah...
* looks at Array *
Now what?

Now we wish for something.
* clears his throat *
"I wish for a river that can heal anything!"

Suddenly, a gorgeous river appeared in front of them.

Woah!
* looks at Array *
Are you... worried, Array?

Kinda... but I'm hopeful.
* takes a breath and takes one step forward *
Alright, let's get this over with.

Team Bushra sat down and watched as Array slowly approached the river and then put his hand inside it. At first, Array didn't feel much of anything. But after a few seconds, he felt like his soul was getting sucked into the river with just how much pain he was trying to endure. And finally, he got his hand out of the river and looked at it. The gauntlet was still stuck to his hand. He tried to put his hand inside the river again, but the gauntlet didn’t fall off. Before he could try for a third time, the river started disappearing. Array looked back at Team Bushra in shock.

I... what...

Array…

* takes a breath in relief *
You know? Even though the gauntlet isn't gone, I think the river took all of the radiation from it!

Oh? Are you sure about that?

* smiles *
Yeah! I feel so refreshed right now!
I haven't felt this way since we met!
I think it actually worked!

But what about the gauntlet?
Didn't you want it to be removed?

I mean, kinda.
But the thing is... this stupid gauntlet doesn't define who I am!
It never did...
* looks at Team Bushra *
You guys showed me that.

We are so proud of you, Array.

Yeah, we are so happy you are here!

Thank you, mates.
* looks at the woods *
I guess we are on our way back to Diamond City.

Yup!

* remembers something *
Oh, crud.
What are we gonna tell Artender about what happened to his car?

“Ah.”

And thus, the trio was on their way to Diamond City. Surprisingly, the way back home was a lot more peaceful than any of them expected. There were no hoodlums, monsters, or anything else. It was just them. They spent a lot of quality time together too. While Team Bushra was talking about how they could explain Artender's "missing" car, Array was thinking of his future. Now that he is healed, what now? It took them a couple of days to reach Diamond City. The three paid for a taxi on the final stretch of the road. After all the troubles they went through, they were finally back home—well, almost all of them were.

Man, I can't believe I missed this place as much as I did.

I know, right?
I really missed sleeping in my comfy bed and of course... the food.

Yep.

But yeah! We are here now!

Come on, guys!
We might surprise the Tender family!
* looks at Array and notices that he wasn't following them *
Array?

Is something wrong, buddy?

I... don't think I should come with you guys.

WHAT?!

Hold on now, I didn't mean it in a negative way.

But then... why did you change your mind?

Look... I have been thinking about this on our return back here
As much as I would love to be with you... I don't think I'm really suited for team work.
I'm more of a "lone wolf" per say.
Plus...
* holds G's hands *
You found a place you can call a "home", G.
I… still haven't.
Maybe I need to explore the world on my own to figure out what I want to do in life.

If that's what you want... I can't really stop you.

* takes a breath *

Very well, I will be on my way then.
Say hi to the Tenders from me-

No, wait a second!

G quickly checks his pockets and gives Array the photo they took on Mount Neverends.

Please, take this with you.
It would mean so much to me if you kept it with you.

Heh... thank you, G.
* hugs him for one last time *
I will try to contact you guys soon now that I know where you guys live.

That would be much appreciated.
We, I mean. "I" really enjoyed your company.

Thanks, mate.
* looks at G *
Please don't start crying, G... I will always be with you.
This is not an end, this is a new beginning for both of us. Okay?

* trying to hold his tears *
Y- yeah...

Array started walking away into the wilderness and looked back for one final time.

* trying to not show his face to Team Bushra *

Take care…

And just like that, Array was gone. He rushed towards the woods and then disappeared. G was filled with so many conflicting emotions. He was gone, just like that.

Are you-

* wipes his tears *
Y- yeah, I'm fine.
I just... didn't expect this.

Me neither.
But... it will be fine, G.
That was his choice and we should respect that.

Yeah…

YOU TWO.

GAH! ARTENDER?!
WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?!

I saw you two from the balcony while we were having dinner there!
* takes a deep breath *
WHERE HAVE YOU TWO BEEN, WHERE IS MY CAR, WHY DIDN'T YOU RESPOND TO ANY OF MY CALLS, DID SARPO AND CLOE CALL YOU, WHERE DID ARRAY GO, WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED TO MY CAR....

Woah there.
Calm down, buddy.

What do you mean by "calm down"?!
We didn't hear a word from you three for a long time!

We are tired, dude.
It's been a busy week.

Also you know how terrible the connection on Perdiah is!

That isn't an excuse!
You two will pay for the new car I will purchase!
* notices G shedding a tear *
Oh man…
Okay, I might have overreacted a tad bit.
* looks around *
Wait, where is Array? Did he-

He left to do his own thing...

Aww, dang. That's a shame.
I really liked his company too...

Yeah…

Were you guys able to help him out with his gauntlet thingy?

Yep, the radiation is gone now.

That's good to hear at least, the kids were worried sick!
Speaking of them though...
* looks around *
...it's getting late you two.
I want you two to write your signatures on the MPC 2 mission document before you go to your homes.

That sounds good to me.
Right, G?

Yeah, sure…

Plus, someone you guys know came back recently.

Oh? Who are they?

* smiles *
I want it to be a surprise.

Alright then.

The three entered the headquarters, wrote down their signatures, and immediately went to the balcony. When they arrived at the balcony, Team Bushra saw two people they didn't expect to see there.

Sarpo? Ms. Meow?!
You are back!

Hello, G!

Heya, Team Bushra!

How was the vacation?

We couldn't arrive there on time for... reasons but…
* looks at Cloe and holds her hand as both of them blush *
I got to spend time with the prettiest Traveler in Perdiah.

Aww, honey!
* hugs Sarpo which almost makes him fall from his chair *
You are so nice!

Always for my beautiful flower!

* whispers *
Are they... you know?

* also whispers *
Yeah, definitely.

Meanwhile, G was wondering where Artender's kids were. He didn't

have to keep wondering for much longer, however, as he heard sounds of running from inside the building. Suddenly, PotaTeo jumped into Bushra's arms to hug him, while Emily followed from behind him.

Mr. Doodle, Mr. Stoked!
You are back!

We sure are, Emily.

Now, kids.
Calm down.

It's fine, Artender.
* looks at PotaTeo *
How are you doing, little guy?
Anything interesting happened while we were gone?

PotaTeo shakes his head. Bushra noticed that PotaTeo was looking for someone, though.

And what were you up to, Emily?

Me and brother Teo played video games, watched TV and then we drew a picture with Uncle Tender!

Aww, that’s sweet.

Here, take a look!

G looked at Emily's adorable little drawing. It was a drawing of everyone in MPC2 as one big family... but then he noticed that Emily also drew Array on it.

Also, where's Mr. Thunder?
I wanted to show him this too!

…

Mr. Doodle?

Sorry Emily, Mr. Doodle isn't feeling well today.

Aw… sorry, Mr. Doodle.

It’s… It’s fine, Emily.

Do you guys want to eat or something?

No, thank you.

Why so? We brought a bunch of stuff from our trip.

* puts PotaTeo down *
I think he's just full.

We ate fish in bread on our way here.

Ooh, that explains it.

Sorry to interrupt but can I go now, please?
I am not in the mood today.

If you say so, G.

…thanks.

G leaves the building in an instant. Bushra was getting a tad worried for his best friend.

* nervously chuckles *
I- I should probably follow him.
* looks at Emily and PotaTeo *
Array says "hi" by the way, kiddos!
* looks at the other three *
Uhm.. see you guys later!

Bushra leaves the building by jumping out of the balcony and using his water powers to slow down his fall.

Since when could he do that?

Not sure.
I don’t know what’s up with those two.

I don't know, hon.
They have been acting like this ever since they came back.

Well, at least G is.

Yeah…

(sad) Did they not like my drawing?

No, sweetie.
You and your brother did great.
I think G is just frustrated about something.

Oh, okay.

Quite a shame that he is acting this way when we all just got back together again.

I think we should give him some space, hon.

You are right.

* looks at the clock *
Shoot, it's getting late.

Emily?

Yes, Uncle Tender?

* points at PotaTeo *
Please take your brother and wait for me outside.
It's time to go back home.

Okay!
* picks up PotaTeo *
We are going back home, Brother Teo!
Are you excited?

PotaTeo nodded as the two went inside the headquarters to pack up their stuff.

I will be there in a second, kids!
* looks at Sarpo and Cloe *
Did you two warn the regional guards and the locals about the giant crystals?

Sure did.

Good. I was frankly terrified at the possibility of Team Bushra being stuck around those things.

Yeah, same.

Do we have a lead on who or what might have caused this?

Currently no.

"But whoever it is, we need to stop them before it's too late."

Meanwhile; outside Team Bushra's house;

G!

Bushra?
Why did you follow behind me?
I thought you were gonna stay with the others.

It didn't feel right without you there, buddy.
Say, what is the problem?
Are you… still thinking about him?

(Sigh) Yes, sadly.

Don't worry, buddy.
You know he is gonna come and visit us eventually, right?

Y- yeah but... I just miss him a lot.

(Sigh) Me too, buddy. Me too.
But like he said, we will meet again soon!
That's gotta be worth something, right?

... you are right.
Thanks, Bushra.

No problem.
Now, if you will excuse me, I’m getting inside the house.
It’s getting cold out here.
Will you-

I will get inside in just a bit, don’t worry.

Alright then.

As Bushra entered the house, G looked at the stars one last time and said, "Goodnight, Array. I hope you are safe out there."

TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
RESCRIBBLED
PIZZA PARTY
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CHAPTER 24: PIZZA PARTY

Array was gone... just like that. Even though Bushra wanted to help him out, he decided to give G some personal space. It was only fair, after all. After a few hours went by, G looked at the ceiling and thought to himself;

"Tomorrow is another day."

G! Wake up, buddy!

Ugh... Bushra?
What's going on?

Sarpo called me just a minute ago!
He said we needed to have an emergency meeting in the headquarters!

* yawns *
Is that so?
Just my luck, I guess...

Come on, G...
I know you are still upset but we REALLY need to get there in time.
I don't think Sarpo will be forgiving like last time!

Why do you think so?

He sounded very... defeated in our call.
I'm worried about the guy.

I haven't seen him this tired since the olden days.

That’s unfortunate.
I hope he will get better soon.

Right…

* reaches out for a nearby water bottle *
Once I change my clothes, I should be good to go.

* stands up *
Okay, I will wait for you outside till you change your clothes.
Cuz' we really need to get a move on or else we are totally screwed.

Hold on.

(Sigh) What's wrong, G?
I told you that we needed to be quick.

I just... wanted to tell you something.
Do we have time for that?

I mean... possibly?
As long as it isn’t too long, at least.

Well... I just wanted to say... Thank you.

…okay? For what?

For staying by my side, Bushra!
Even in the hardest times, you have always been there to support me.
You didn't joke about the time I got turned into a toaster, you were there for me when we helped Array out and I could go on and on...
I'm just really grateful for having a great friend like you.

Thanks, G.
I really appreciate that.

I'm so glad you do.

As much as I would love to talk with you… we are running out of time.

I understand... Can we continue talking about this after this is all over then?

Sure, buddy.
Let's hurry!

"We don't want to be late for this!"

A few hours later, inside MPC2 headquarters' meeting room;

Thanks to everyone for showing up on time today...
*looks at the group *

Our situation is.... dire, to say the least.

* whispers to Bushra *
What's he referring to?

* whispers back *
I don't know, guess we will find out soon.

Ever since we came back from our vacation, we have been hearing news of people encountering giant crystals all around Perdiah.

We even encountered one ourselves when we were on vacation.
Did any of you see one by any chance?

I saw it on TV.
So... not really.
* looks at Team Bushra *
You guys?

Well, we saw one giant crystal popping out of Mount Neverends.

It even affected The Mountain That Never Ends?!

Mount Neverends.

* puts his finger in front of G's mouth *

No, we are not doing this again.

…fine.

(Ehem) So, as you guys can clearly see, this is a very urgent matter.
I can't allow something like this to go out of control under my watch again!
So, we are getting to the bottom of this.
HERE AND NOW!

Oh okay, that makes a whole lot more sense.

Okay so...
* points at Team Bushra *
Did you two encounter anything else strange on your trip?

Hm... not that I recall.

Wait, hold on, Bushra.

Hm?

Remember when Array said he saw a purple haired girl run off inside the woods?

Yeah?

He told me on our trip back home that the girl had crystals attached to her skin.
And apparently, she had a sack filled with shiny objects that she planted.

Tell me more about this girl.
Did she interact with any of you?

Well, Array said that he tried to talk to her but got no response in return.
He said that she had lifeless eyes too.

So what you are saying is; there are a bunch of these crystal people running around Perdiah planting those weird things which in turn created these crystals.

That's the likely theory.

But why?!
Why would people like her willingly plant these crystal things?
It doesn't make any sense... unless...

Sarpo suddenly stands up with a shocked expression in his eyes. He remembered all the times where Hood tried to unleash a deadly weapon upon the world. He was able to stop her every time but he never suspected that someone else would be interested in her machinery.

Is there something wrong, Sarpo?

Hon, are you okay?

* takes a deep breath and holds Cloe's hand *
I'm... I'm fine, Cloe.

Sarpo sits back down.

I- I think I know what we are dealing with here, folks.

Really now?

It's the Crystallizer 2.0.
Hood tried to use it on me back when I was captured by her goons.
It turns the people that have been affected by it prone to mind control!
I never thought someone would attempt to reuse that idea for their own benefits...

Are we sure Hood's not behind this?

I can confidently say that she's not.
I looked after her more times than I could count and she never once brought up this "crystallizer" thing.

So we can rule out Hood being a part of this mess.
And if it's not her... then who is behind all this?

Sarpo's phone starts ringing.

Uhm… hello?
Kinda busy at the moment.
How can MPC2 help you-
* his eyes start twitching out of fear *
I- What... Sir, where do you live?
SIR?!

The call suddenly ends.

Hon, what happened?!

The- there are more of those crystal people and they are attacking Town Bloom!

"Cloe, prepare the caravan! We are going there NOW!"

YAY! ADVENTURE!
Aren't you excited too, brother Teo?

* nods*

Are you sure bringing the kids with us was a good idea?

Hey, I couldn't have just left them on their own in the shack!

That's fair, I suppose.
I think Bushra is just worried because we don't know what we will encounter when we get there.

Fair point...
* looks around *
I'm surprised Ms. Meow was able to keep the caravan after her departure.

I just think it’s neat.

I wonder if she still wanted to be part of a circus even after so long...

I'm just glad that it doesn't smell like crap, anymore.

Don’t say that in front of the kids.

Just can’t help being right, you know?

Oh, for the love of…

Ah... just like old times...

* enters the room *
Alright guys, we have arrived at our destination.

As the group got off the caravan, they were shocked by the scene in front of them. The heavenly paradise Sarpo and Cloe visited just a few days ago was now filled with the screams of people running away for their lives. And of course, as Sarpo expected, the entire town was filled with crystals.

Did you call for backup, hon?

I sure did.
Hopefully with their help, this nightmare will be over soon.

This doesn't look very fun...

PotaTeo jumps off from Emily's arms and hides inside Robert.

Okay kids, stay inside the caravan until we are done here, okay?

O- okay, Uncle Tender!
I will take care of brother Teo and Robert!

* pats her on the head *
Good girl.

As Emily goes inside the caravan, Artender catches up with the rest of the group. Even if he didn't have any magical powers or abilities, he knew that he could take down anything if he put his mind to it. He notices the group hiding behind the nearby bushes.

Hey guys, what are you doing here-

SSSHHHH!

* whispers *

What was that for?!

Sarpo points at the center of the town without being seen. And to no one's surprise; there she was. The same purple haired girl Array saw that day. G felt a little bad for messing with Array that day over this... turns out he was right all along. She was ordering the other similar looking "crystal people" to do something.

There goes another town... ATTENTION, EVERYONE!

Every single crystalized person turns their heads towards the purple haired girl at the same time.

We have "pacified" every Perdian we have come across in this area.
So that means our job here is done.
* grabs a notebook from inside her pockets *
Town Bloom has been conquered for our beloved queen!

A "queen", huh.

So what are we gonna do now?
* looks around *
Wait... where's Sarpo?

He was right beside me just a second ago-

ENOUGH OF THIS, LADY!

(Gosh dang it, Sarpo!)
(What are you doing?!)

Who's this now...
Turns out that we did miss a few Perdians in the area after all.
* notices Sarpo's robotic parts *
Ooh... fascinating.
Our queen might be interested in this.
* points at him *
Bring me the purple man with the robotic parts and crystallize everyone else!

A huge crowd of people suddenly started running towards Sarpo all at the same time. Even though Sarpo knew that what he tried to pull off wasn't the smartest idea, he still had a plan. Right as the crowd reached him, he reached out to his pockets and used his fabled fan. As he stumbled everyone onto the ground, now was his chance to neutralize the purple haired girl. But she was also expecting an attack from him.

* blocks his laser attack with her sword *
Cute. Now, it's my turn.

Sarpo quickly transforms his robotic arm into a sharp sword and blocks her attack. It was a difficult fight. Sarpo knew that he didn't have much time left until the crowd came to their senses again. Thankfully, the rest of his team were now on the battlefield as well. G and Bushra were fighting side by side like always, Artender was also with them. But he could not see Cloe anywhere.

You are making this harder than it has to be!

What do YOU know about thing being difficult?!
You are ruining this world!

Suddenly, the girl knocks back Sarpo with a risky sword slash. She quickly reaches out to her pockets and pulls out a ray gun. Sarpo noticed that it looked like a mini version of the Crystallizer.

I tried to be gentle.
But you refused **her** kindness.
Our queen will not be happy about this.

Before she could press the button, Cloe makes her drop the gun with her sudden claw attacks. Cloe steps on the gun to destroy it just in case. The girl was shocked and slowly retreated while Cloe was helping Sarpo get up.

C-Cloe?

What were you trying to do there, mister?!
You could have been killed or worse!

Sorry, hon. I was just really focused on the mission.
Speaking of that mission though...

GRR….

The purple haired girl looks around and realizes that they were losing.

FALL BACK TO ME, CRYSTAL KNIGHTS!
THE KINGDOM CALLS!

Hey, what's happening?!

They are following her to a "kingdom" of sorts.

Come on, we can't lose them now!
To the caravan!

* spots the purple haired girl *
Not so fast, lady!

* blocks Bushra's attack *
They will catch up with us if they get in their vehicle.
Priority changed: DESTROY THE CARAVAN!

NO, DON’T!

Destroy WHAT?!

Even though the team tried to prevent the inevitable, it was still a hard scene to watch. The caravan exploded right in front of their eyes. It couldn't handle hundreds of people damaging its fatal parts all at once. Artender was shocked beyond belief at what just happened. Emily and PotaTeo... were they... No... they couldn't....

No... this... this can't be...

UNCLE TENDER?!

EMILY?!
You are safe!
But… how?!

After hearing shouting from outside, me and brother Teo wanted to

help you beat bad guys up… did I do a bad thing?

Artender hugs both of them.

Um…

* trying so hard to not cry *
N- no, Emily.
It's all okay.
You did the right thing.
Everything is going to be okay...

The Tender family see the rest of MPC2 rushing in to help.

Is everybody safe?!

Y-Yeah…

I think we should fall back and wait for the back-up folks.

ARE YOU ALL OUT OF YOUR MINDS?!
* points at the retreating army *
WE CAN'T LOSE TRACK OF THEM NOW!

Hon, please, relax.
I know you are trying to look out for us but-

Sarpo starts chasing after the army without giving a warning. The rest of the group tried to catch up with them as fast as they could. Artender picked up Emily on his shoulders and ran after the others.

After 10 minutes of running, Sarpo suddenly stopped in his tracks. He tried to see where they ran off to but the whole army disappeared into thin air. There were no signs of their whereabouts.

(Huff... puff...) We made it...
* looks around *
Oh, hey! Bushra, look!

* trying to catch his breath *
What is it, G...
* notices something *
Oh wow, it's Coria Cave!

The what now?

We rested here when we were still traveling around Perdiah to defeat Hood!
So... that means...

Town Unda is near!

Huh...
* looks up *
Are you kids doing okay back there?

* hides PotaTeo inside Robert for his safety *
Y- yes, Uncle Tender but... I'm scared.

Don't worry kids, everything is going to be okay...

Think happy thoughts!
We are gonna go back to living peacefully in our little shack once this whole thing is over!

O- okay...
* notices Ms. Meow behind her *
Hello, Ms. Kitty! You also made it!

Cloe ignores her and heads right next to Sarpo. Things were about to get dramatic!

What were you thinking back there?!

Me?! What were YOU thinking?!
We could have caught the purple girl if we didn't waste time there!

Forget about her for just a second!
* points at the Tender family *
Emily and PotaTeo could have died back there and all you are doing is rushing into things!

I...
* looks at the Tender family *
I- I'm sorry, everyone.
I just really wanted our lives to go back the way they were!
I was... too focused on the mission that I forgot who I valued the most.

* takes a breath *
Thank you, Sarpo.
Now, let's wait for the backup to arrive and then we can continue looking for those crystal people and their queen.

That won't be necessary.

Before any of the MPC2 members could even flinch ever, a bunch of crystal knights jumped out from behind her. It looked like they were coming from a... transparent invisible passage? Nevertheless, the group was surrounded in a circle format with their so called queen, watching behind them.

You better not make a move or else one of my "angels" will crystallize you with their ray gun.

No response.

That's better.
This was not the meeting I had in mind but I can’t complain now.
* notices Bushra trying to reach out to the nearby lake *
Don't even think about it, fisher boy.
We dried up that lake ages ago.

* takes a breath *
Y- you are that-

Oh, NOW you remember me?
Only when I become a nuisance to you, huh?

M- miss Maizie?!

(Sigh) Hi, Emily.

Artender was filled with dread at that moment. What was even happening anymore?!

How do you two know each other?!
Emily, what's going on-

SILENCE!

Maizie quickly pulls out a staff from underneath her cape and hits the ground really hard with it, causing a bunch of crystals to cover the area. She then looks at everyone's horrified expressions with a smile on her face.

There we go, that's MUCH better.
* clears her throat *
Now, where were we? Oh, right!

Artender watched in terror as Maizie slowly walked towards Emily.

I certainly didn’t expect to see you again… and at their side, no less.
But that doesn’t really matter now.
We can talk about this later, okay?

(confused and scared) O- okay, Ms. Maizie...

Glad we could both agree.

Maizie suddenly raises her left arm and snaps her fingers. While Artender was about to rush in to save his daughter, the crystal knights instead took a step back and started bowing to Maizie in place.

(confused) What are you trying to do?

* points at the passage *
I just want to talk with all of you.
To see what I have missed out on, you know?

No response.

Awfully quiet day, isn't it?
* waits for a couple more seconds *
Well, your choice.
* looks at her army *
Make sure none of them try anything funny.

They all nod in unison.

And Clara?

Yes, my queen?

You are coming to the throne room with me.
We have MUCH to discuss.

Of course, my queen.

As for the so called "heroes"... Follow me.

Maizie slowly walked towards the passage and phased through it much to everyone's confusion. Sarpo was the first person who started to follow her. As he walked closer and closer to the passage, he realized that it was just an illusion. "So that's how they were able to hide their tracks.", he thought. But little did he know what awaited him on the other side...

SAY HELLO TO.... **THE CRYSTAL KINGDOM**!

Sarpo could not believe what he was seeing. This person created a whole kingdom right under their noses. It was filled with crystalized people living their everyday lives without a care in the world. Some were driving cars, playing games and doing so much more...

It's amazing, right?

I don't know what to say...

Ugh...
* covering his eyes due to the sheer brightness of the place *
What in the world are we looking at?

You are looking at my greatest achievement!
Me and my comrades have built this from the ground up!
Isn't it so lovely?!

That's one way to put it...

Here, let me show you around.

As the group followed Maizie, each one of them were having existential crises. G and Bushra were thinking of how to get out this horrid situation while Sarpo and Cloe were hoping that the back-up team could save them in time. Meanwhile; Artender was filled with so many mixed emotions. Them being captured was one thing but Emily knowing about the person whom was holding them all hostage was something that he still couldn't believe in. If that was the case, was Emily originally a...

OOH! THIS ONE'S MY FAVORITE!

Everyone's thoughts were interrupted as Maizie was geeking out over a statue of her in the middle of a fountain.

* looks at her army *
Did I ever tell you that you guys did a stellar job, cuz I love this so much!
Isn't it so great?

* tries to smile *
I- I think it looks nice, Ms. Maizie...

Thank you for your kind words, Emily.
Glad to know you are still a good girl.
* yawns *
Well anyway, let's go to my throne room now!
It has even more amazing stuff inside it!

As they were getting closer and closer to the castle made out of crystals, Artender noticed a bunch of deflated air balloons close to its entrance. Maizie noticed Artender looking at them.

Oh, you were wondering about this, huh?

Yeah?

These hot air balloons are here for special occasions!
Like watching over all the places I conquered!

Artender just shook his head and continued following her from

behind. It was all hopeless. When the group entered the castle, they quickly realized that this place was far bigger than they initially thought. There were a bunch of seemingly unnecessary rooms just for a few specific activities. A room dedicated to swimming, another room for doing exercises, and so on. There were a bunch of large windows alongside arrow loops right next to them. This castle's design was a mess. After climbing up a bunch of ladders, the crew finally saw Maizie's throne. Maizie casually starts dancing and sits on her throne in joy.

So... what do you all think?!
Pretty awesome, right?

No response.

* stands up *
Oh, come on!
It's no fun this way!
Just say something!

Lady.

Yes, my furry friend?

Cloe-

Can it, Sarpo!
* takes a deep breath *
Lady, I don't know what you are trying to do but I assure you, we will make you pay for all of this!

OOOOOHHH! I'm sooooo "scared"... NOT!
* sits back down *
I don't know why you guys are acting like this when I have been kind to you since we met-

Oh, shut up already!
We didn't come here willingly and you know it!

Oh, I assure you, Sarpo.
I DO know a lot about all of you.

Peh, I bet you don't know anything about me, you monster!

Pretty words for someone who willingly abandoned her best friend when he needed you the most.

YOU LITTLE-

PLEASE, STOP FIGHTING!

Everyone in the room, including Clara, looked at Emily. Artender never saw her this frustrated and sad before.

* covers her eyes *
Please…

...sorry, Emily.
It's just that your friends here aren't exactly the most kind people I have seen...
But you are right, this is no way to treat guests!
* looks at the group *
So...

Maizie points her staff at the group as they all take a few steps back from fear.

Do you guys want to eat something while we talk?
I'm getting hungry.

(scared) S-Sure?

I guess…

NO, WHAT IF YOU PUT POISON IN THEM!

Oh, please! I'm a queen, not a barbarian.
I would NEVER do such a thing!

* looks at Sarpo *
What should we do, hon?

Sarpo winks at Cloe, letting her know that it will all be okay. The more they stall for the back-up team to arrive, the better.

So it’s decided.
We accept your generosity, "Queen".

Thank you, Mr. Fields.
* looks at Clara *
Clara, can you tell Joseph to get us some pizza to eat?
Preferably for 8 people.

Of course, my queen.
I will bring you the PERFECT pizza.

Yeah, you go do that.
As for the table...

Maizie pulls out her staff and creates a table, as well as chairs, made out of crystals in the middle of the room.

Get yourself comfortable!

Sweet!
* picks his seat *
Woah, this is really comfortable!

I know right?!

Thank you!
It's made out of natural crystals from my own making!

Do not get yourself TOO comfortable though...
* feels something lightly pulling him *
Wha-

Can you act nice to her, Uncle Tender?
I don't want us to fight again...

(Sigh)
* lightly pats her on the head *
Very well.

* whispers at Sarpo *
This is seriously uncomfortable.

* whispers back *
You tell me.
Why would someone create a whole kingdom worshiping her just to have a pizza party with us?
She obviously has other intentions in mind.
The second she shows her true colors, we will stop playing nice.

* hears knocking on the door *
OOOH! The pizza arrived!

Maizie jumps out of her seat and opens the door herself. She sees Clara carrying a bunch of pizza boxes with her bare hands.

Whoops, let me help you out, Clara.

Thank you, my queen.
You are so kind.

Aww, thank you!

Maizie and Clara carefully put the pizza boxes on the table for everyone to start feasting! At first, none of the MPC2 members touched their pizza before Emily started eating. Which made everyone else start eating as well.

Mmm!
This is so delicious, Ms. Maizie!

* drinks water *
This is Martin's doing.
He is amazing at making pizza!

Martin is so cool!

He sure is...
* burps *
So, what were you guys up to while I was busy with... this?

With what, exactly?

* smiles *
Don't worry, I will explain my side of the story once you guys are done.

Uh huh…

* takes a bite out of her pizza slice *
Well, we dealt with Xtress and his shenanigans.
Then we looked around Perdiah and saw crystals appear out of nowhere which led us here.

Fascinating stuff.
* takes a sip out of her glass *
Anything else?

Not that I recall.

Well, it's pretty darn long. So...

Maizie stands up with the staff in her as she starts slowly walking around the table.

"After your precious boyfriend punched me in the face, I ran away in fear to a room where no one could find me. I was scared and hurt after everything that happened to me. When everything around me started crumbling, I didn't know what to do. But then, I saw my rocket ship on the other side of the room. I quickly hopped on it and started driving away from the base before I was seriously hurt. But even my poor old rocket ship wasn't enough to get me to safety. After a few hours went by, my rocket ship started malfunctioning. I crashed into a forest nearby a town called Town Unda. I donned my hoodster outfit and tried to get the town folks' help. Thankfully, the town's mayor, Clara Spades, was a great help to me. I loved rebuilding the town with her by my side..."

Aww, that's cute!

Heh, sure...

Emily decides to check her little brother since she was getting a bit worried.

Brother Teo?
Don't you want to come outside?

PotaTeo shook his head in worry. He was adamant on not going outside.

If you say so.

* takes a breath *
As I was saying...

"Unfortunately, nothing lasts forever. While we were spending time together, I was preparing a device that would help me get everything I wanted. I rebuilt the Crystallizer after I stole the blueprints of it from an old friend. At first, it was very difficult to get it working. I tested out on a bunch of people and the majority of those experiments failed. I had to shift the blame on other people to save my skin. Just when I perfected the technology, Clara found out what I was trying to do. I had to... crystalize her too."

I understand why it had to be done, my queen.

Thank you for your understanding, Clara.
It was a really difficult choice for me to make but I'm happy that it worked out in the end.

“So after everything that has happened to me, I knew what I had to do. I started expanding the area I had control over. After Clara was

done with it, I realized that there was no reason to hide my intentions to the townsfolk. By the end of the week, they were all... **happy** again.”

...

Sarpo suddenly stands up and points at Maizie.

You didn't help them out, you brainwashed them!
Did you send these innocent people to do your dirty work?
Is that why there are giant crystals everywhere?!

I'm not a fan of your attitude, Mr. Fields.
And patience, you will get your answers soon enough.
As I was saying...

"After Town Unda was fully converted, I sent out a bunch of the townsfolk to plant small crystals that would naturally grow, all around Perdiah. We knew that we would get noticed by the outside world eventually. We had to do something to cover our tracks. One of the crystal knights told me about a place called The Mountain That Never Ends. They reported that it was basically an inescapable maze. I went there myself to see what it was all about and I found out about how that place worked. We realized that the way it loops around was the result of illusions surrounding the mountain. We used that trick for our own benefit and replicated it to hide our kingdom away from outsiders."

And, that was it!
* sits back down *
Pretty short, right?

No one said a thing. It was just way too much to take in at once.

But... why?
Why go to the trouble of doing all of this when you could have just asked us for help?!

You see, there's one thing that I didn't mention.
My love... Kyle...
They died in the hands of Hood.
Ever since then, all I wanted to do was to bring them back.
When I saw nearly all of my hoodster friends getting turned into ashes and forming Xtress as we know it, I realized what was up.

Maizie points her staff towards Sarpo, much to his shock.

WHAT?!

BUT HE IS DEAD!

NO, HE IS NOT.
Can't you feel it?!
* looks around the room *
He is still here... waiting to strike at any moment...

YOU ARE CRAZY!

You can't call me crazy when I have solid evidence suggesting his presence.
In fact... even some of your friends might have a say in this.
* smiles *
Isn't that right, Team Bushra?

...

What's she talking about, you two?

I- It's a long story!

One of my crystal knights saw them tackling Xtress himself with a blonde person accompanying them.
That's enough evidence for his existence.

But why do you need his powers so badly?

Isn't it obvious?
* slams her fists to the table *
I want to have the reason I want to continue living again.
I want to have the brightest star in all the galaxy.
* slams her fists a second time *
I WANT THE LOVE OF MY LIFE BACK!

Maizie took a few steps back from sheer anger. She knew that she couldn't leave herself vulnerable in front of these people.

So... did that answer your question?

Y- yeah?

If that's the case... What does any of this have to do with us?!

Great question, Mr. Fields.
I was just about to spill the beans myself.
I'm very well aware that Xtress isn't his most powerful self at the moment.
That power must be hiding somewhere else.
* chuckles *
That's why I brought you all here!
To obtain the final pieces of Xtress' great power!
REEEHEEEEE!

Suddenly, the door behind them opens and a bunch of crystal knights enter the room.

It's been fun, MPC2 but your reign over Perdiah has now concluded.
It's now time for a new order to take its place!

Do you really think we will give up that easily?

Oh, I don't know.
You just might after everything you have seen in my beloved kingdom.

What happened to treating guests with respect, lady?

Oh, believe me.
You will continue to be treated as such once the crystallization process is complete.

You will do no such thing!
We have a back-up team coming that will stop your plans-

Oh, you mean the team my knights CRYSTALLIZED half an hour ago?!

(disgusted) You...

What about your lover?
Would they approve any of this?!

...

Please, Ms. Maizie!
You are a good person!
I know you don't want to do this-

SILENCE!
* hits her own head in anger *
Clara, bring them all besides Team Bushra to the dungeons for future crystallization!
I want to oversee all of them myself!

Of course, my queen.

YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS!

* waves goodbye as the door closes in front of her *
See you on the other side, Mr. Fields.
* looks at the horrified Team Bushra in the middle of the room *

Now, let's get this over with.

* tries to back away *
Now, hold on just a minute!
W- we can talk about this!

Time's up, Bushra.
* lightly his chest with her staff *
I'm SO going to enjoy this!

G was horrified. He couldn't afford to lose a friend... not again. He waited for the perfect opportunity to attack her with his hammer. It was their only chance.

Let's just get this over with.

Maizie pulls out her staff and sticks it to the ground. She then starts chanting a spell that none of them ever heard before.

Kilometers apart.
You have been suffering for long enough!
Lend me your power!
End this curse once and for all!

G pulls out his hammer at the last second to hit Maizie on the head. Maizie tried to protect herself with a giant crystal pillar but it was a bit too late.

G, NO!

As both of their attacks collided, a giant explosion knocked back everyone in the room. The whole room was filled with red mist as a result.

* holding his head *
Ugh...

G! COME ON, BUDDY!

W- what happened, Bushra?
My head hurts...

You distracted her!
* tries to get him up *
Come on, buddy!
We need to save our folks!

A- alright, Bushra.

* trying to find her staff in the mist *
CRYSTAL KNIGHTS, DO NOT LET THEM ESCAPE!
NOT WHEN I'M THIS CLOSE!

Shoot.

As soon as Maizie said that, the whole room was filled with crystal knights everywhere. Team Bushra got out of the throne room as fast as they could. But the crystal knights were even faster.

They are onto us, Bushra!

I know, buddy.
But we can't stop now!
We need to find Sarpo to think of a plan to get all of us out of here!

Got it!
* notices a single crystal knight holding the Tender family hostage *
There they are!

Nice catch, buddy!

These guys should be easy to deal with...

G tries to summon his hammer but... he couldn't. Instead, his head started to spin again.

Hey, what are you waiting for?!
He is gonna notice us!

* trying to keep his balance *
I- I can't summon my hammer...

WHAT?!

Hey, you are not supposed to be here!

Team Bushra?!

G and Bushra decided to split up to different hallways so that they could prevent the crystal knight from catching either of them. They were trying so hard to not get hit by his crystal gun. The crystal knight started getting confused after running through so many hallways.

WHERE ARE YOU?!
SHOW YOURSELVES!

* smiles *
If you say so.

Bushra makes Jack trip and G opens the window behind them, causing him to fall down the castle.

Ah.

He will be fine.

Mr. Stoked!
You saved us!

My pleasure, little one.

I helped too!

Yeah, yeah. You can talk about that later.
I'm sure other crystal people will notice our absence sooner than later.

Okay but where's Sarpo and Ms. Meow?!
Weren't they with you guys?

They were.
But Clara took Sarpo to another floor for some reason but Cloe refused to let him go so Clara took her as well.

Ms. Kitty was so angry and scary looking...

Darn it.
We were too late.

Calm down guys, maybe we can still save them before we are found-

Suddenly, the whole room they were in started turning red.

She was close by.

What's happening?!

I don't know but we need to get out of here... RIGHT NOW!
* looks around *
This way!

Bushra holds Artender's hand by force.

Woah buddy, aren't we going to try rescuing Sarpo and Ms. Meow?!

Bushra but I need to get my kids somewhere safe.
Every second we spend here increases the chance of us getting turned into mindless slaves!

…no.

What do you mean “no”?!

Yeah, you heard me.
Bushra could have just left you to die in Town Mercia if he just thought about himself and no one else.

Artender turns his back in shame.

(Sigh) You are correct.
We can at least try to save them.

Knock knock...

Everyone turned their backs and saw Maizie running towards them with a bunch of crystal knights behind her. She was already in the middle of casting another spell. While the crew already started running away, G looked at the hall behind him. It pained him to leave the two of them behind but he unfortunately had to agree with Artender on this one. While the others ran away as they possibly could, G was still thinking about what happened to his powers. All thoughts were interrupted when Bushra pulled G away from an oncoming spell attack.

Come on, G! Hurry up!
What are you even thinking about?!

Sorry, sorry!
* still thinking *
I think... She took our powers, Bushra.

Are you sure?

I- I guess so.

That's strange cuz I think I still have my powers.

Really now?

Yep.

If that's the case... Did I interrupt the spell with my hammer to protect you from its effects?

Possibly.

The two make a run for any sort of exit they could find. They notice the Tenders trying to keep the door open for them.

There you guys are!
Where have you been-

NO TIME, CLOSE THE DOOR NOW!

I don't think the door will keep her away for that long-

G notices a huge crowd of crystallized people in front of them. All the crystal knights around the fountain were pointing their ray guns at them...

That's it!
Bushra, the fountain!

On it!

Bushra quickly created a wave in front of him and pushed back all of the crystal knights before they could fire a single shot.

WOOH!

Bushra!
* hugs him *
Dude, you are a lifesaver!

Hey, don't get sappy now, alright?

Okay!

I'm glad you guys are getting along but we have no time left!

I saw a bunch more crystal knights heading straight for us!

* cracks his knuckles *
You can leave that up to me!

Please be careful, Mr. Stoked...

Alright... As for how we can get out of here...
* looks around and noticed the deflated balloon *
There! We can use this to get out of here!

* hits a crystal person with his elbow *
Good idea.

Artender looks at Emily and sees that she is still upset. She didn't want to show his face to his uncle to not make him upset.

Emily?

Y-Yes?

Look, I'm so sorry for the things that happened today.
I know that she was important to you...
But we really need to focus on getting out of here first.
Or we will-

-become scary shiny people?

...yes. But right now, I need your help more than ever.

I can't fly this thing without your help.
So please, help your old man out.

O- okay, Uncle Tender!
* holds his arm *
Promise we will try to talk to her again, okay?

We sure can try, Emily.
But not now.

I understand…

And with that, the Tender Family tried to get this balloon high off the ground. G and Bushra were still trying to fight off the crystal people but there were just so many of them. They didn't have time to think about what they were going to do after they were out of here. All they had in mind was to stall for time.

Unfortunately for them, they noticed Maizie running towards them in pure rage.

YOU WON'T ESCAPE FROM HERE!

Oh, we will, alright!
* points at G *
I will try to keep her here, G!
You make sure the Tenders are successful.

While Bushra was keeping Maizie in place with his water powers and dodging the ray guns, Emily was turning the fan on as the balloon started to rise up in the air.

W-we did it!

We sure did, Emily.
* starts shouting *
TEAM BUSHRA, WE ARE DONE HERE!

Sweet, our ride back home just arrived.

NO!

Maizie tries to crystallize Bushra but he dodges all of her attacks.

Nice try but if you will excuse me, we will be on our way now.

Maizie was furious beyond belief. She couldn't get Bushra's powers to herself which would have been extremely difficult for her in the long run.... unless...

Come on, Bushra.
We aren't gonna make it!

Alright, buddy.
I'm coming!

CRYSTAL KNIGHTS!
KEEP ALL YOUR ATTENTION TO THE GREEN ONE!
CRYSTALLIZE HIM IMMEDIATELY!

While G was trying to not get hit by any of the ray guns, Bushra was still protecting him with his powers. Since they wasted time trying to fight back against Maizie's command, the balloon was too high up in the sky.

Dang it, what are we gonna do now?!

I…

Bushra was horrified. No matter where he looked, there was no way both of them could jump high enough to reach the balloon.

G.

Yes?

Climb on my shoulder and jump when I tell you to.

How will that help?!

Just listen to me and do as I say.

O- okay...

YOU HAVE GOT NOWHERE TO RUN!

* smiles *
Or so you think...
Now, G... JUMP!

As G jumped high into the sky, Bushra used his powers to launch G even further. Meanwhile G was trying to dodge all the oncoming lasers and was barely able to hold the rope the Tenders were holding. The Tender Family helped him get inside.

Thank goodness you are safe, G.
* looks around *
Where's Bushra?

He is still down there!
He didn't tell me what he was planning-

Right as he said that, they could hear Bushra's panicked breaths as he was holding the very tip of that same rope.

BUSHRA!

Heya, G!
Mind if you... GET ME UP THERE?!

Oops, so sorry, dude.
* takes a deep breath and starts to pull him up *
Phew, you got me really scared there.

... sorry for that.
* smiles *
I was just trying to catch her off guard.

Well you sure did cuz they aren't even shooting at us anymore!
* smiles back at Bushra *
I'm so glad that you are safe-

IGNORE THE BALLOON!
FIRE AT THE FISHERMAN!

WHAT?!

Before G could process what was going to happen, all he could do was scream his name for one final time.

BUSHRA, NO-

And then, silence. G didn't know what was real or not anymore. Bushra was crystallized right in front of him and he couldn't do anything to rescue him. He watched as Artender took the rope away from his hands and cut it so that Bushra couldn't reach them. His head started spinning even worse this time. He couldn't hear what Artender and Emily were saying at that moment. He could hear the two of them breaking down crying in front of him but who cared at that point. The friend he thought he could rely on at any given moment in his life was just... Gone. Just like that. All G could do was look at his hands in shame as he slowly lost his consciousness.

Meanwhile Queen Maizie was watching them as the balloon disappeared from her view. Even her strongest crystal spell couldn't reach that high.

* takes a breath *
Well played, MPC2.
You may have won this time but I assure you, I will find wherever you are hiding.
You won't last for long without your precious leaders.
And...
* smiles and looks at the newly recruited Bushra *
...I have a bunch of toys I can use against you.

Sorry for interrupting but what should we do now, my queen?

No need to keep wasting resources on the illusions!
They already know of our existence so there's no point in keeping it.
* points at the rest of her army *
Order your crew to crystallize every town they encounter from now on.
No more hiding in the shadows!
They will know the wrath of **QUEEN MAIZIE!**

Everyone in the kingdom cheered for her.

As for our prisoners... Crystallize Ms. Meow but leave Sarpo to me.
I need to learn how his robotic parts work for a... future project.

Understood, my queen. I will be on my way.

Thank you, Clara.
* looks at the only remaining crystal knight next to her *
As for you, Bushra... you are going to tell me everything you know about your **old friends.**

END OF PART 2

BONUS CHAPTER

The previously scrapped chapter is back for you all to enjoy! Originally, the events of the chapter were suppose to happen between Chapter 23 and 24. It was essentially Chapter 23.5. But because of it ruining the pacing and me not being proud of the final product, I ended up scrapping it.

Now however, I have rewritten it in such a way that it can either be considered canon or non-canon depending on the person. I had way more fun with this version than the previous Blogger one.

Can you spot all the game references this chapter has to its source material? Only one way to find out!

@Sonic32Super

TURTLE KART: DOUBLE BOOST

TURTLEDOODLE1 VIDDO3K

COVER
B
TURtLE'S
EXPEDITION
RESCRIBBLED
P1
P2
TURTLE KART:
DOUBLE BOOST
TURTLEDOODLE1
SONIC32SUPER

TURTLE KART: DOUBLE BOOST

In another time, in another place...

And…. That should be it!

Sarpo gets off the stairs and looks at the banner he just put up.

I gotta admit, Sarpo.
This is going to be a fun time!

Yup, I got cookies to eat after the show!

That’s lovely, G.

This was a great idea to get folks’ minds off things!

Indeed so.
* Looks at his wristwatch *
Now, we wait for the Tenders to show up.

Can’t we start without them?
The people are eagerly waiting for us!

That would be bad sportsmanship.
Besides, they have two out of the four teams!

Two out of… four?
I thought there were three teams.
Me and Bushra, Artender and Emily and you guys.

Well…

Well, well, well!
We are here now!

Hey everyone!

Hi there, you guys!
We were just talking about you!

Fascinating, I'm sure.

So… may I ask, who's gonna be in Team 4?

* Tips his top hat like a fedora *

You, Teo?
But you know you need two people to participate in this!

PotaTeo quickly rushes towards Emily and picks up her trusty backpack, Robert.

Ah.

Hope that answered your question.

It sure did.

* Looking at his list *
Well, that's everyone!
We can finally start the race!

Heck yeah!

This is going to be fun!

An hour later, on the Diamond City broadcast;

ATTENTION EVERYONE!
Today, four teams consisting of MPC2 members will be racing each other to win a prize… a golden trophy!
I hope you will be there to watch it live!

A unanimous figure turns off the radio and looks at his crew with a smile on his face. They knew what they were going to do today!

You excited, G?

Oh, you bet!

Does this bring back any memories?

Sure does.

Being part of a team of two, entering a competition for the promise of a trophy… yeah, pretty nostalgic.

I wouldn't call it "nostalgic" per say but you do you, dude.
* Looks at their vehicle *
Are you sure our kart is ready to go?

Pretty sure, yeah.
I made sure to check if any of the other teams hijacked our kart as well!

…why would they do that?

Bushra holds G by the shoulders.

G, this is a competition.
Competition CHANGES people.
They are not the same people you know now, consider them dead.

That's… ominous.
We are just gonna race for three laps.

You will learn all this stuff in the mist of the battle field!

Dude, we literally were in a battle field at one point-

Shush, G.
Don’t make me reconsider your loyalty to the team as well.

O-Okay…

Bushra suddenly smiles.
Well, then.
Help me get this thing to the raceway.

“They won’t know what hit ‘em!”

You sure you are ready for this, hon?

Pretty sure, yeah.
It’s will just be a one-off race anyways!
I’m sure the other guys are also having fun.

If you say so.

You guys finished?

We are, yeah.
* Covers his face *
The lights are making me a bit dizzy though, too many paparazzis nearby.

Now that you mention it… yeah, there's a lot for some reason.

When are we gonna start, Uncle Tender?!
Pleaseeeeee….

In just a second, sweetie.
We are just waiting for… (sigh) Team Bushra.

Sorry guys, we were late-

As usual.

Well, since we are here now, we might as well start, right?
Don't want to lose anymore time.

…you are right.

YIPPEE!

Wait, since Ms. Kitty Cat is here…who's gonna be the commentator?

Well, we had an audition for the position and…

The entirety of MPC2 hear the sounds of a mic peaking and then look at the giant monitor in front of them.

Hello there, everyone.
Jennifer Stills here and today, we are here to watch the-
* Looks at the script *
-oh right, the best race you will ever lay your eyes upon and stuff like that!

I think I remember her from somewhere…

Get your popcorns ready cuz this is about to get doozy!
* Drinks from a bottle of water *
Nailed it!

She seems pretty into it.

You don't say.

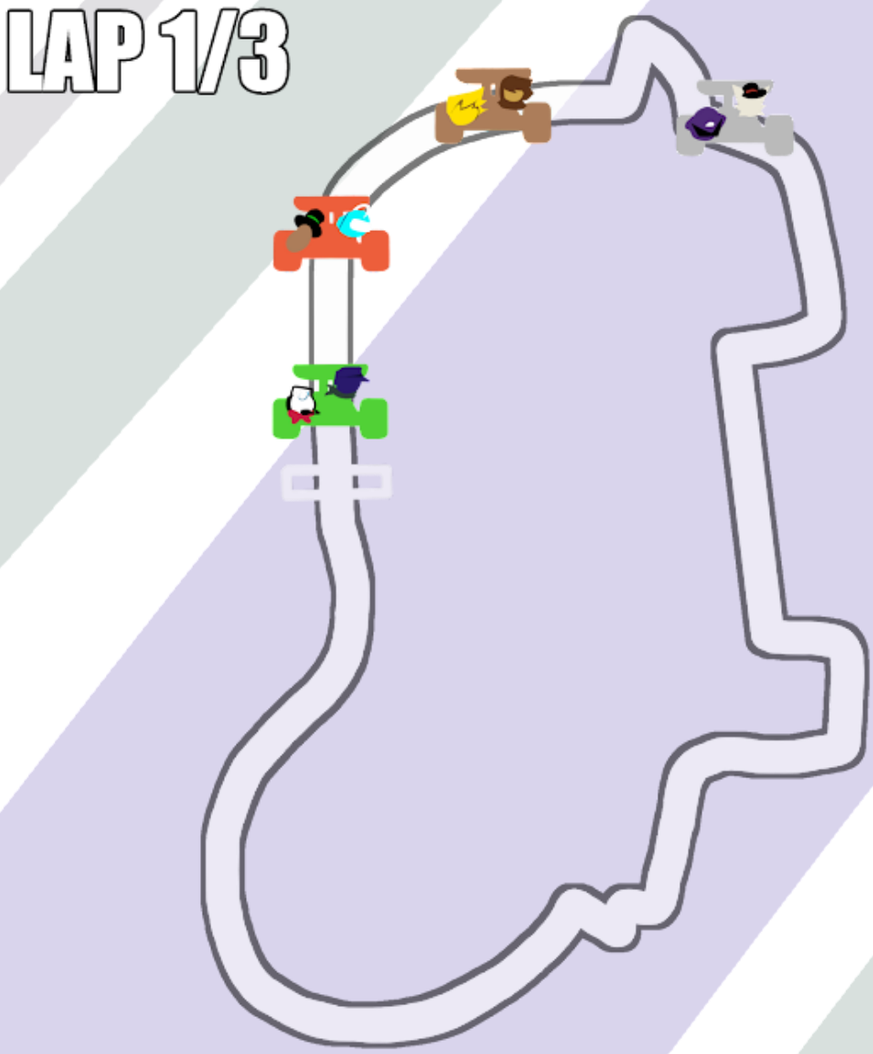
Let's get this thing started then!

You said it, hon.

YAY!
We are going karting!

* Gives the group a thumbs up *

READY… SET… GO!



Sarpo and Cloe have the lead!
Team Bushra better keep up with the pace!

WHY ARE WE GOING SO SLOWLY, G?!

* Looks down *
Wait... was I supposed to continue pushing the pedal?

* Looks behind her *
Hon, Team Tender is catching up to us!

Did you manage to grab any of the item boxes?

Sure did!
* Opens the box and looks at what's inside *
It looks like a green turtle shell.

That will distract them long enough!
Just throw it at them!

Alright!

Looks like the cat’s out of the bag!
…or rather the cat’s using the bag to keep the lead!

Artender quickly dodges the shell.

Phew, close one!

You are so cool, Uncle Tender!

Thank you, sweetie!
* Notices the item box further ahead *
Can you safely grab the item box, Emily?

Sure!
* Quickly snatches it without any harm *
Here!

Take a peek at what's inside!

Okay! Woah... it's a triple Red Shell!
I love red!

That's really cute, sweetie.
Now, kindly throw it at Sarpo and Cloe, okay?

Wait, did you hear that-

Suddenly, all three shells hit Team Sparcloe, allowing Team Bushra to catch up with the rest.

OOF!
Big loss on Sarpo and Cloe's part!
Now Team Tender is on the lead!

* Notices an item box *
What on Perdiah is that?

The item boxes?
The things you grab onto and they give you an advantage?
I thought you knew about this already-

Shush, G.
Don't lecture me.
We are getting close to the enemy territory!

But-

What is it?

Ms. Meow and Sarpo are right behind us!
If you want, we can change places so you can grab the item boxes instead.

Oh, sure.
I don't see why not.

They got the right idea, hon!

Let us do that as well.

You think you can handle this?

Oh, please!
I'm a professional caravan driver, a kart can't be too different!

Alright then.

Sarpo picks up an item box and finds a mushroom inside it.

Woah.

* Dodging the bananas Team Bushra was throwing at them *
What did you find, hon?

Hold still, Cloe.
This is gonna be a bumpy ride!

Alright.

What on are they doing there…
* Notices Sarpo holding a mushroom *
Ugh, mushrooms?!
How will that help?

Wait, did you just say mushrooms?

Yeah, what of it?

Before G could respond, Team Sparcloe boosted right in front of them.

Heard of awesome comeback stories before but this is an all-time high!
Will Team Sparcloe be able to get 1st place again or will the fisher and the fisher catch up to them?!
Let's find out.

(Sigh, she remembers…)

Team Tender finishes Lap 1 with Team Sparcloe right behind their tail. As lap 2 started, several ramps came out of the ground to spice up the race!

This is so much fun!
* Looks behind her as she picks up another item box *
Ooh, I got a banana!

WOO!
* Notices something in the distance *
Oh right, we are gonna be dealing with the hazards from this point on!

Really?!

Yup!

Is it gonna be dangerous…

Oh, it's just the ramps to gain more speed.
Nothing too dangerous, sweetie.
* Notices one of them close by *
Let me show you how it’s done!

Artender drives the kart towards the ramp to gain more speed.

WOO!

YAY! This is so much fun!

Meanwhile, outside the raceway;

When are we gonna join in the “fun”, boss?

Not until I give a sign, patience is key!

“Besides, Murray still needs to finish our ride!”

Yikes!
Team Tender just got hit by a buncha bananas!
In fact, it’s driving me bananas just saying this!

Aw… we got hit…

The race isn't over yet, Emily!
We still have one more lap to catch up with them!

Oh okay!
I didn’t know that!
* Notices Team Bushra driving next to them *
Oh, hello Mr. Doodle and Stoked!

* Holding three mushrooms in his hands *
Sup, Emily!
* Puts them inside the car engine *
Bye, Emily!

Bye bye!

G winks at Artender as Team Bushra became 2nd place.

…oh, right.

Hmpf…

Meanwhile inside MPC2 headquarters, someone was watching the race unfold on the big screen.

* Holding a Cloe themed flag *
WOOOH! YOU GO, GIRL!
SHOW THEM NO MERCY!

Back to the race itself;

Yo, G!

What's up, dude?

I saw Artender trying to pull off something with the ramps before we went pass them.
We can try to use them too!

Good idea!
* Drifts towards the ramps *
HERE IT COMES, HOLD ON TIGHT!

You don't have to tell me twice!

Team Bushra get a massive speed boost after the ramp jump.

WOO HOO!

You were right, Bushra!
They do give us a boost!
We will pass Sarpo and Ms. Meow in no time!

You said it!

Not for long!

Oh, for the love of-
* Throws a white colored squid at them *
You are annoying!

* Dodges the squid right on time *
GRRR! Same could be said to you!

Oh, Bushra!

What is it, G?
This better be important!

I think I'm actually getting the hang of this driving thing.

Cool.
* Points ahead of them *
Then, think you can go through that tight corner with no problem?

…maybe.

"Maybe" isn't good enough!
* Hops back on the driver's seat *
You focus on picking up item boxes again.

If you say so!
* Picks up one of them and sees three green shells inside it *
Jackpot!

Uncle Tender, what is Mr. Doodle holding?

I don't know Emily but we need something to defend ourselves…
QUICK!

Uhm…

Emily looks around the race course for an item box and manages to pick it up before Team Bushra noticed. Unlike all the other times she opened the box, this time there was nothing inside. Not even a note like Sarpo's. Instead, the box shape disappears into thin air and creates a small circle around their kart with little smiling suns!

Woah...

I don’t remember this item from anywhere…

G, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
JUST THROW THEM ALREADY!

R- right, sorry.

G took a break and threw all 3 green shells towards Team Tender. Before G could ask if he could go back to driving, he saw something that made him gasp in horror. The circle around Team Tender's kart

was gone but in exchange, Emily was holding all of the green shells G just threw at them.

Bushra, we might have a problem-

What are you talking about-
* Their kart was hit by the green shells *
UGH, WHAT THE HELL?!

Hey, I was trying to warn you, alright?!

Huge news from the race!
Turns out Team Bushra acted recklessly once again!

Save your ramblings for later, G!
Now we need to-
* Notices Artender *
YOU!

See you at the finish line, Team Bushra!

B-but, what about this whole thing being a fun time?!

The battlefield changes people, G…
See you around!

BUSHRA WAS RIGHT, CURSE YOU!

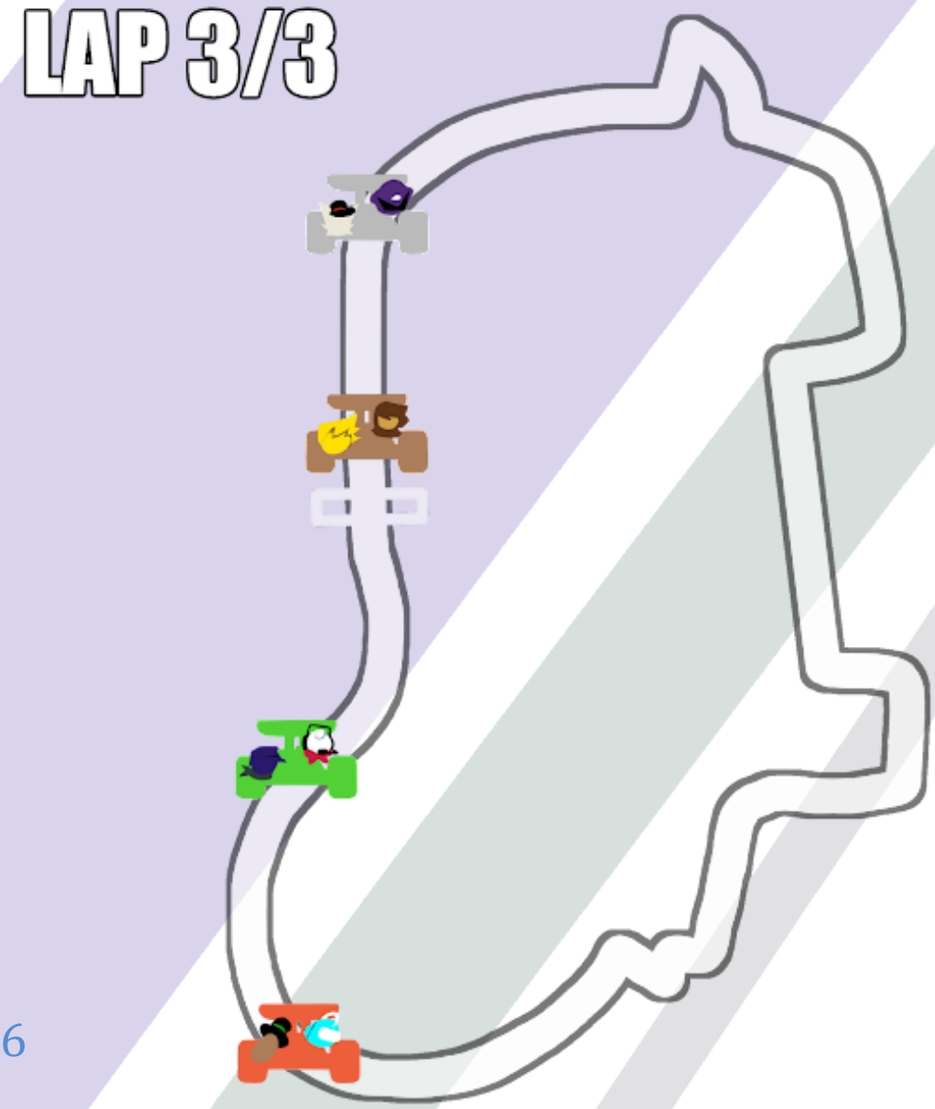
Artender chuckles and takes a deep breath. Then, he turns back and looks at the excited Emily.

We are so close to catching up Sarpo and Ms. Meow, Emily!

YAY, we are gonna win!

Hopefully so.
Strap in, Emily!
Cuz we are-

- ON THE FINAL LAP!
We will see who gets to keep this awesome trophy and which others go back home crying to their parents!
Only one way to find out!



This is it, Cloe!
The final lap!

Yup! Is anyone nearby?

Only Team Tender.
They are closing in on us rather fast.
* Reaches out his hand *
Would you like to do the honors, m'lady?

* blushes *
Oh, shush you... Fine, I will.

* Hops on the driver’s seat *
I will use the ramps to give us more speed, let me know if they throw something like a shell at us!

Got it!

GRRR…

Uncle Tender, are you-

Yes, I am fine.
You focus on picking items up!

Uncle Tender, you know we don't have to win, right-

No.

Why not?

I will win this whole thing for my little girl!
No matter what it takes!

Th- thanks Uncle Tender!
I really appreciate it!
But can you please calm down a bit?
I will be okay even if we don't win.

* Takes a deep breath *
You are right, Emily.
Guess I was too competitive again...

It's fine, Uncle Tender!
Let's just have fun until the race ends, okay?

* smiles *
Good girl...

So, uh.... you two wouldn't mind if we just yoink’ed this item box?

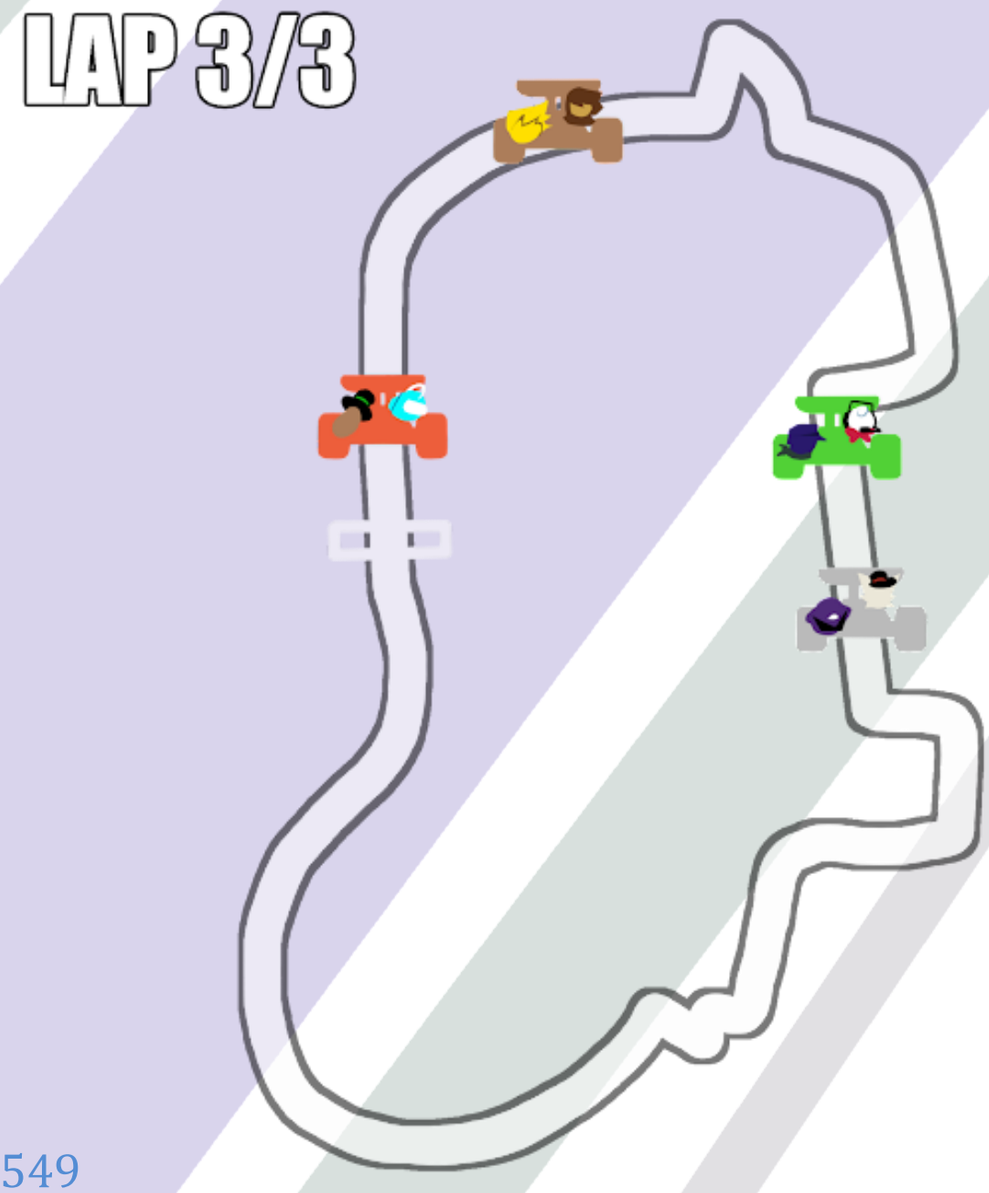
WHA-

We appreciate your collaboration!
We will definitely give you guys a shout out in our ceremony!

…

Dang it.

Artender sighs but realizes that ultimately, it didn't matter. He had fun with his daughter and that's what counted. He stopped their kart and looked at the sunset.



Honey, Team Bushra is on our tail!

What did you get from your previous item box?

Three bananas…

Ugh... Just throw them and hope that they slow down.

Alright!

Yo Bushra, do you see the bananas they have on their hands?

Sure do.
* Quickly dodges one of them *
That won't be enough to stop us!

* Picks up another item box *
You are so good at dodging the traps, dude!

Save your compliments for after the race!
* Sees the finish line *
THERE IT IS, WE ARE ALMOST HERE!

Not for long!

What the-

G blocks Joyce's potion attack with his hammer. When he looked besides him, he saw that the Rascals were driving on their own kart.

The Rascals?!

Miss us?

NO!

Aww, shucks… guess we better leave now- NOT!

G blocks another potion attack.

You guys are exhausting.
Why are you even here in the first place?

Isn't it obvious, boy?
The shiny trophy will be ours for the taking!

You guys are literally wanted criminals!
Do you think they will just hand it to you?

If they don’t, we can just steal it back!

The Rascals?!
* Looks at Cloe *
Cloe, park the kart somewhere safe.
I need to do some hero-ing!

Alright, hon.
Be safe!

Oh my!
What do we have here…
A new challenger has arrived on the raceway!

The Rascals hit Team Bushra’s kart, causing Team Bushra’s kart to fall over. They were now disqualified.

You guys cheated!
You even have three people on the same kart!

Don’t waste your breath, G.

* Not listening to their screams *
YIPPEE! WE DID IT, BOSS-MAN!

Indeed, we did.
Now, we get rid of the remaining kart and we will be set for life!

Uhh, sir?

WHAT?!

Suddenly, Sarpo punches Markus on face. While they were fighting, Cloe threw a sleeping dart towards Murray. The kart was out of control!

What happened to the kart, Murray?!
Joyce looks next to her to see the unconscious Murray.

FOR **** SAKE, THE HECK AM AH SUPPOSE TO DO NOW?!

Joyce leans over to the steering wheel.

HOW DO YA' USE THIS THING?!

Joyce lightly pushes the steering wheel to her left and instantly crashes the kart. The raceway was now a wasteland.

Let me go, you spaz!

Never!
I won't let you hurt these people!

For the love of Xtress, we were just here to win that trophy!

…oh.

Sarpo lets Markus go and looks at the trio.

You ruined this show for everyone!
I hope you three are proud of yourselves!

Well, actually ah am-

Artender enters the scene alongside Cloe and the, now hurt, Team Bushra.

SARPO?!
Are you alright?!

I'm alright.

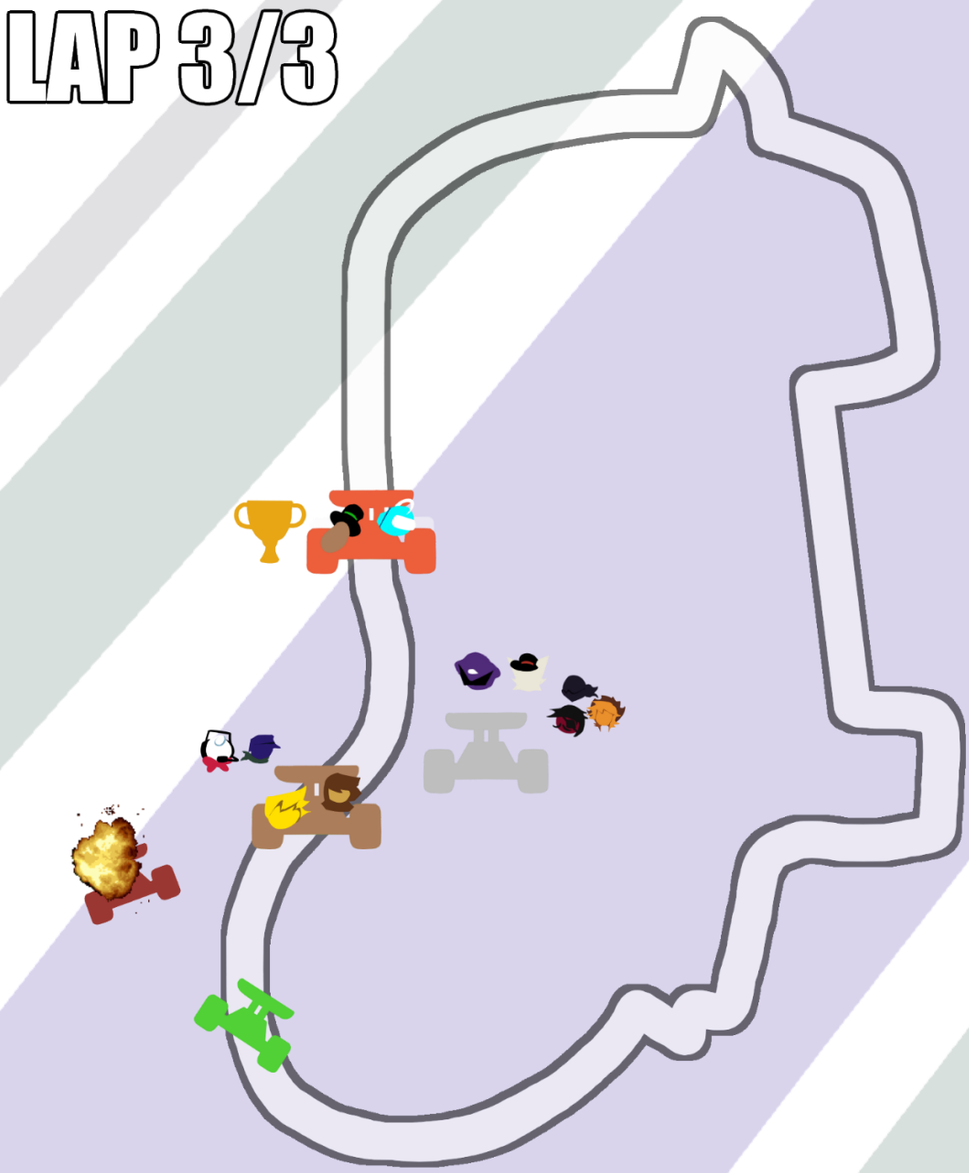
I guess the whole thing was a complete bust, huh?

Sure, seems like it.
Well, at least no one will get the trophy now-

AND…. WE HAVE A WINNER!

WHAT?!

THE WINNERS ARE…



POTATEO AND ROBERT!

The audience started clapping, thinking this was all part of the race. PotaTeo jumped out of the car while holding Robert and was having the time of his life. He held the trophy on top of his head and started dancing in the middle of the crowd. The rest of the MPC2 members were rightfully confused to say the least.

ARE YOU SERIOUS?!
* Throws her remote towards the TV and frowns *
What a waste of time, I'm going back to watching Mandy & Friends reruns!

THEY WON?!

B- but…

Unbelievable.

NOW, THEY CAN GET TO THE STAGE AND GET THEIR PRIZE… A PLASTIC TROPHY!

A… plastic…. trophy?

* smiles *
First time?

Markus' entire world was crushed right in front of his eyes. He laid down on the floor while covering his face.

And so, our lil' tournament ends with a funny but underwhelming final lap.
"Someone" should get some better security measures for next time.
Oh well…
* Poses at the camera *
This was Jennifer Stills, see you on the next one! (hopefully)

W-Well, we can at least capture the Rascals now-

Nah, ah don't think so.

* Bosses around the just woken up Murray *
We are borrowing one of ya’ karts, if ya don’t mind!
* Looks at Markus *
Ain’t that right, boss-man?

P-Plastic…. plastic…

Yeah, he needs some time alone.
Toodles!

The three were able to escape before any of the members could do anything because of the crowd blocking most of the exits.

Well… that sure was something, alright.
(Sigh) Let's just go home, G.
I'm starving.
* Points at him *
You are cooking dinner today.

(still in shock) Sure…

Sarpo was confused about… everything really. The fact that Rascals hijacked their race and that they escaped, not to mention PotaTeo winning the whole thing… he stayed with Cloe and the Tender family for hours on end until the ceremony ended.

“At least the kids had fun.”, Sarpo thought.

EMILY SHARPS

Emily Sharps is the adopted daughter of Artender and PotaTeo's big sister. She’s a kind hearted innocent soul who trusts anyone she makes in contact with. Even after what happened to her parents, she is still trying to be happy for herself and her new family! She also has a plushie (which also functions as a bag) called Robert, he’s her best friend! She is extremely good at “pointing” at the right directions as well! Unfortunately there are still some things she (unknowingly) keeps secret from others. Including her father figure...

DESIGN DRAWN BY ArtsyDoesStuff

THIS IS ROBERT!

MURRAY SOMBER

Murray Somber is the mechanic of the Rascals. (He's a nerd.) He's also the youngest of the trio. Deep down, he actually doesn't want to be evil but he knows that sticking with the team is his only safe bet at surviving. He respects their leader, Markus, a lot but he is unsure what his other teammate, Joyce, feels about him.

DESIGN DRAWN BY ArtsyDoesStuff

JOYCE FOLIO

Joyce Folio is the crazy loon of the Rascals. She's a cowboy scientist with all kinds of potions at her disposal. She has a cowboy accent from the time she spent alone from her relatives. While she thinks she's the "brains" of the team; she despises the actual one of the team, Murray. Unlike him, she's a part of the team just for the fun of it.

REDESIGN DRAWN BY @sohekun

MARKUS THE HUNTER

Markus The Hunter is the leader of the Rascals. His origins are unknown, besides the fact that he is really good at archery. No one knows what his last name is, not even his own crew! Joyce suggests that it's because of his criminal record before joining the Hoodsters while Murray thinks it's because he's shy. Markus appreciates both of them a lot, even when he can't tolerate them sometimes. He is incredibly greedy and cunning, usually preferring to play by his own rules.

DESIGN DRAWN BY @surely_somebody

CLARA SPADES

Clara Spades is a swordswoman born in Town Unda. She fought bravely against Hoodsters in the 2nd Xtress war to protect her hometown. She's a master at her craft, as she likes to put it. After recruiting a team for herself, she started cleaning up the town until that faithful day... Even if she tries to deny it, she really did love "Lawrence" in the few months they spent together. If only those days could ever come back...

REDESIGN DRAWN BY @Vidd03k

LYDIA MAY

Lydia May is the youngest in Clara's trio, but that doesn't mean she's any less of a worker; a great deal of determination always goes into everything she does! Unfortunately for her, fear of failure gets in the way, perhaps hiding great talents that she's yet to show. That aside, she's always ready to lend a hand!

DESIGN DRAWN BY @Vidd03k

TERRY GOVNER

Terry Govner is the brains of Clara's team. And the brawns. He can do it all! With great problem solving skills and extraordinary strength, he will easily take up any job given to him and he'll finish it up with flying colours. Though he may be rude and rash, he is a caring young man and always available for help!

DESIGN DRAWN BY @Vidd03k

ARRAY THUNDER

Array Thunder is a little guy who has been desperately trying to move on from his past life. After all the hard struggles he went through, he was more than happy to see his childhood "friend" still alive and well. The gauntlet on his hand is a one of a time artifact, something not even the likes of Xtress could try to recreate. He considers himself both lucky and unlucky for having it forever attached to his body. Now that it's no longer hurting him, who knows what solo adventures he will go onto have!

DESIGN DRAWN BY @Vidd03k

SENIOR CARLOS

Senior Carlos was the previous leader of MPC before he had to retire from the position for unknown reasons. He wrote books about his interests in the supernatural since his retirement. He is a father figure to every little member of MPC, Sarpo especially. Carlos always felt he had a lot of untapped potential. Sadly, he didn't get to see him grow up and become his successor.

DESIGN DRAWN BY @Sonic32Super

MIKE SURVEY

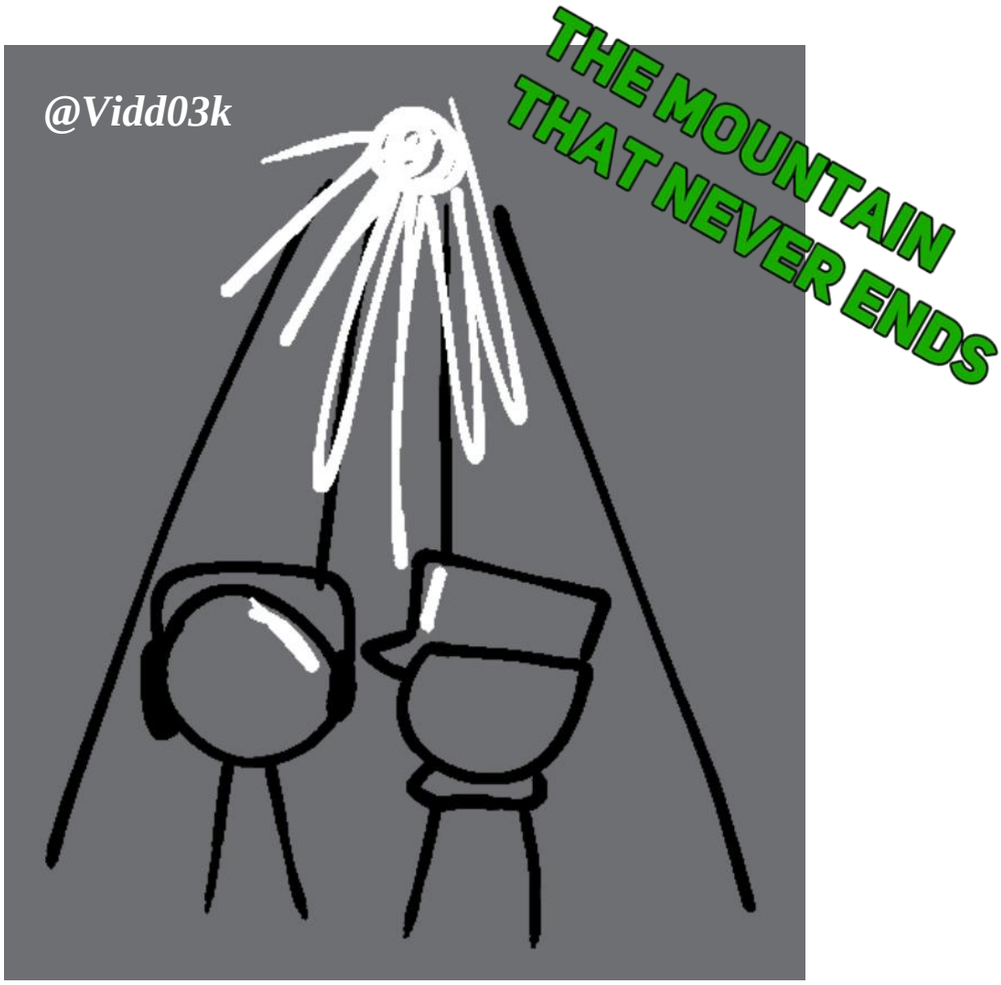
Mike Survey is an ex-hoodster whom is still loyal to the cause. He gathered around groups of hoodsters he could find after the Xtress materialized in the mortal world. He despised the ex-hoodsters that ran away after the 2nd Xtress war ended, calling them cowards. He is a selfish and cunning man, even moreso than the typical hoodster. His purpose is to find Hood after her disappearance and bring back Xtress for total world domination! (He also hates Array with a burning passion.)

DESIGN DRAWN BY @Sonic32Super

MORE WORLDBUILDING!

Well, it's been a while, hasn't it? A lot more stuff has been added to the Planet Perdiah mythos since the last book! Some of which being original, some being inspired by other media etc. I will be explaining how certain parts of Perdiah operate without going into spoiler territory.

So buckle up because this is going to take a while!



Out of every known location in Planet Perdiah, The Mountain That Never Ends (I will just call it Mount Neverends from now on.) easily got the biggest expansion in Arc 2.

It still keeps the original gimmick of the purple smoke and the mountain's overall looping capabilities while adding new stuff on top of it. Such as when **Queen Maizie** used the mountain's powers to essentially make her entire kingdom invisible until the right time arrived. I always thought the mountain was underutilized when it first appeared in Chapter 5. So adding a few more interesting gimmicks just felt right! In fact, this is not all! Some of these untold gimmicks will be explored even more down the line… be onto look out for the mysterious door...

MORE TRAVELER TRIBES???

While **Cloe** used to be the ringleader of Circus Kurza, the circus disbanded after the 2nd Xtress War ended. Some of the Travelers made peace with humans and started living among them (such as the ones residing in Diamond City) while some went back to their life in the forests as different tribes. While **Cloe** kept connections with some of the tribes after she started living in Diamond City, the rest's statuses are unknown. Who knows if MPC2 will bump onto them on their newest adventure!

Some travelers that definitely don't reference outside media!

MAGIC PROTECTOR CAMP 2

Yes, **Sarpo** came up with the name. After the 2nd Xtress War ended, **Sarpo and Cloe** decided to continue MPC's legacy alongside their new friends. **Sarpo** became **Carlos**' successor with **Cloe** at his side. The team's goals were to stop supernatural stuff all around Perdiah from happening while also capturing the remaining hoodsters. At first, the team only consisted of **Sarpo, Cloe, Team Bushra and Artender with PotaTeo** occasionally tagging along for the mission. But later on, a little girl called **Emily** became a part of the team as well as **Artender**'s family. After reuniting with his childhood friend, **G** wanted **Array** to join MPC2 as well but he kindly declined the offer. Now, the team is ready to fight any forces of evil that stand in their way!

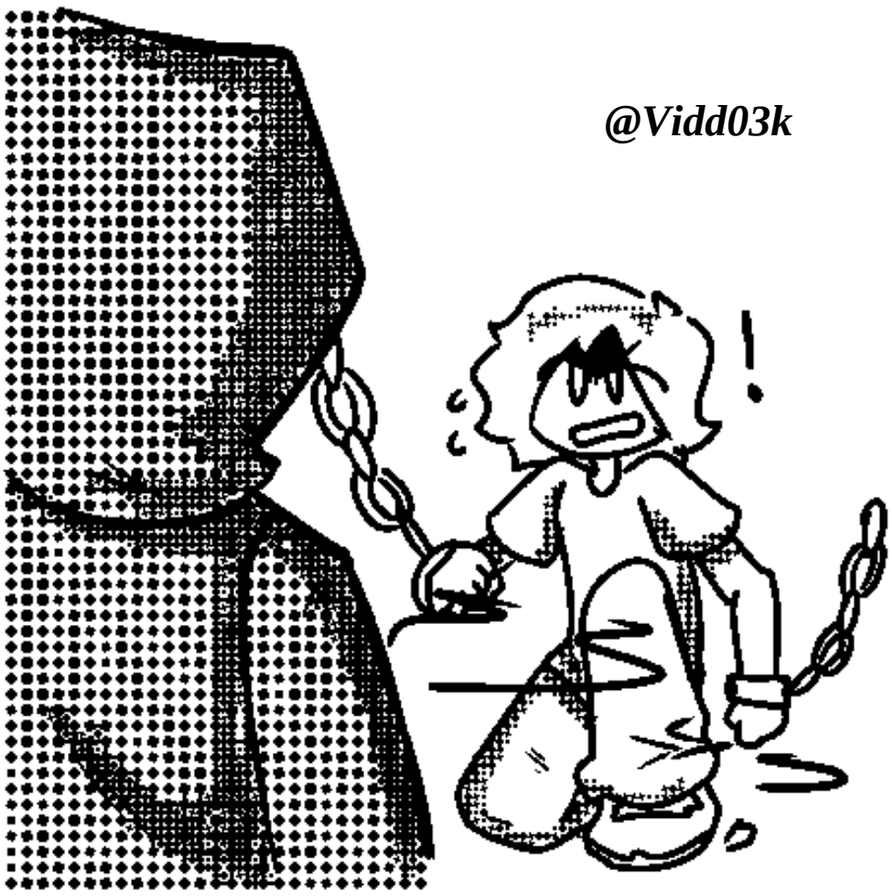
@fangnull

ARRAY AND THE 7 TEMPLES

After **Array** was seperated from **G** (and got his hand stuck in a gauntlet filled with radiation), he became interested in Perdiah architecture. The one that interested him the most were the 7 Temples of Power. There were 7 temples around Perdiah, all connected to a different temple called Temple Tutsu. It said that these temples would become powerful once Temple Tutsu was awaken by a beam of light which he thought would never happen in a million years. He explored a bunch of those abandoned temples back then but never tried entering one, thinking him trying his hardest to get inside would make his condition worse. But after reuniting with **G** (and also falling to the ground), it gave him motivation to try again!

THE UNNAMED TOWN

After the 2nd Xtress War ended, **Mike Survey** gathered around a bunch of ex-hoodsters and decided to construct a new town for them to stay in. While some hoodsters were content with just surviving in the wild, some were still loyal to the cause, including their leader. **Mike** wrote fabricated stories about the past of the town to not make any outsiders suspicious of them. They built statues modeled after Xtress, hoping those would make him appreciate the few hoodsters still loyal to him. They were able to continue their other plans without any major drawbacks for a bit until **Team Bushra and Array** arrived on their town. **Mike** recognized the **Team Bushra** members as well as the ex-hoodster hanging around with them.



THE NOR PLANE

The Nor Plane was the dimension Xtress was sealed inside in a frozen state when the humans decided to team up with the Travelers. (which also ended the 1st Xtress War.) Overtime, the once pure white dimension started getting affected by Xtress' aura and it started changing around him. **Hood** summoned Xtress from there after she sacrificed her special red ring, which didn't work as planned. Xtress was sealed back inside shortly after but unlike last time, he wasn't frozen. So, he caused supernatural activities to happen around Perdiah which were side effects of him trying to get out of the Nor Plane. **Bushra, PotaTeo and Hood** had to enter the Nor Plane to foil his plans. The Nor Plane is a dimension with an overall red color palette. The trees, the grass... almost everything was a shade of red. After a long fight with Xtress, he manages to possess Hood and used her as a vessel to get out of the dimension. When he left, the dimension went back to how it used to look like before Xtress inhabited it.

SCRAPPED IDEAS

Unlike last time, there weren't too many scrapped ideas for the chapters themselves though there are still some notable ones to mention.

- Originally, the crystal knights were suppose to be essentially just mindless zombies unlike now where they are still mind washed but do keep most of their personality.
- Clara wasn't suppose to find the Crystallizer all by herself that night and instead, would have to confront Maizie after she saw the mass crystallization in Town Unda.
- There were suppose to be more than 7 Temples of Power but limiting it to only 7 did make things more managable.
- Array was going to have a crow called Loi to keep him company while he was isolated from the outside world.
- There was a whole cut subplot where Emily and Potateo swapped bodies in the second half of the arc. Teo was suppose to talk about how he wanted to become a human (just like him and his sister) to his dad while he was stuck in Emily's body.

@fangnull

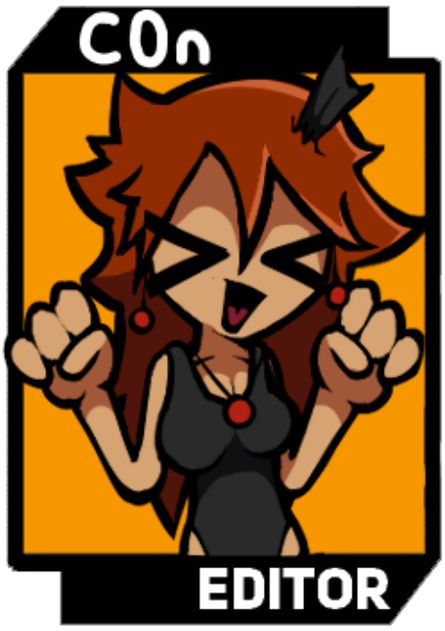
THE TE:R TEAM

TurtleDoodle1
CREATOR/WRITER

Super-Sonic32
ARTIST

Viddo3k
WRITER/ARTIST

Sohekun
RTIST


C0n
EDITOR

Alright guys, you ready for this?

Yeah, yeah.

Awesome! So... say “hi” everybody!

Can't wait to ruin some people's lives!

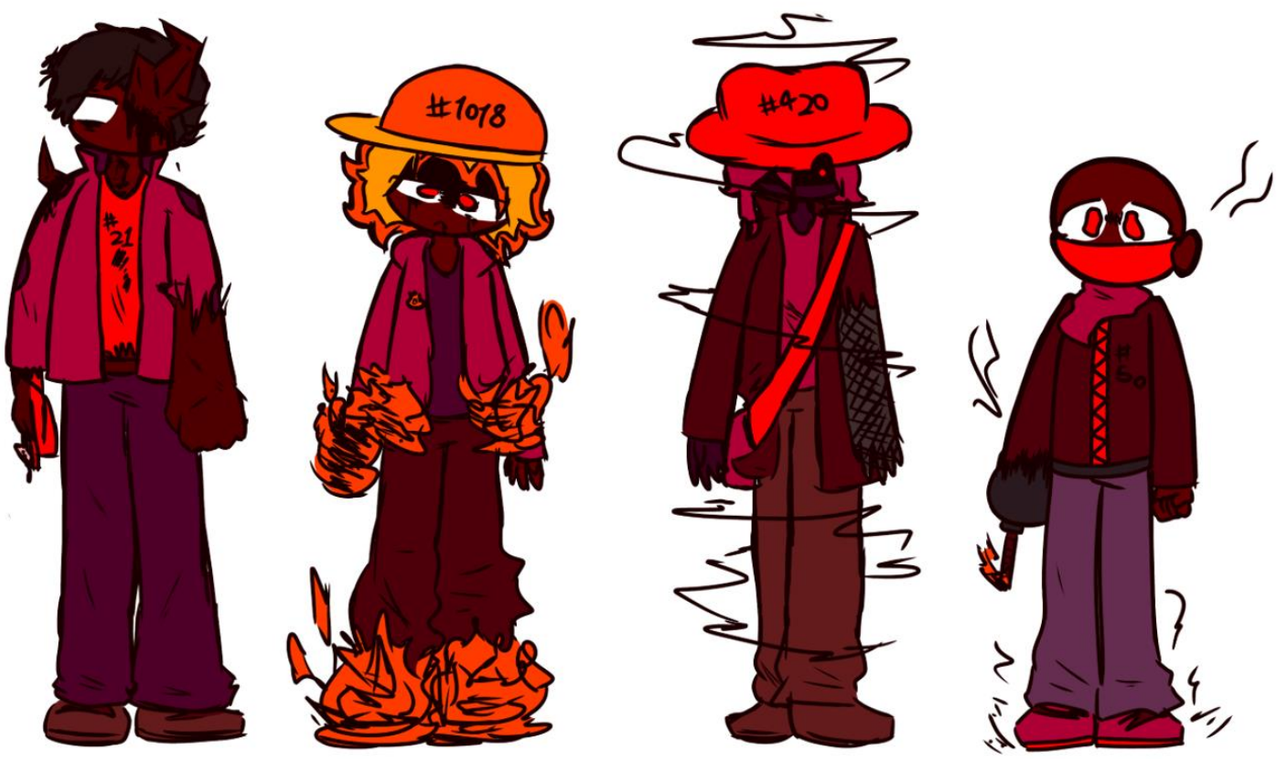
if u a white girl with brown hair and blue sleveless hoodies hmu

wumpus wave

...I hope you guys are just as excited as we are!

ART GALLERY/FANART

Just like last time, almost all fanart featured on the Blogger pages will also be put here! But first... let's look at the art gallery consisting of official drawings!



XTRESS' SOLDIERS DESIGNED BY @VIDDO3K

CONCEPT FOR TERRY AND LYDIA DRAWN BY @VIDDO3K

QUEEN MAIZIE DESIGNED BY @SONIC32SUPER

23 COVER B (CLEAN) DRAWN BY @SOHEKUN

23.5 COVER B (CLEAN) DRAWN BY @SONIC32SUPER

24 COVER (CLEAN) DRAWN BY @SOHEKUN

VOLUME 2 COVER (CLEAN) DRAWN BY @SONIC32SUPER

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STAILS32

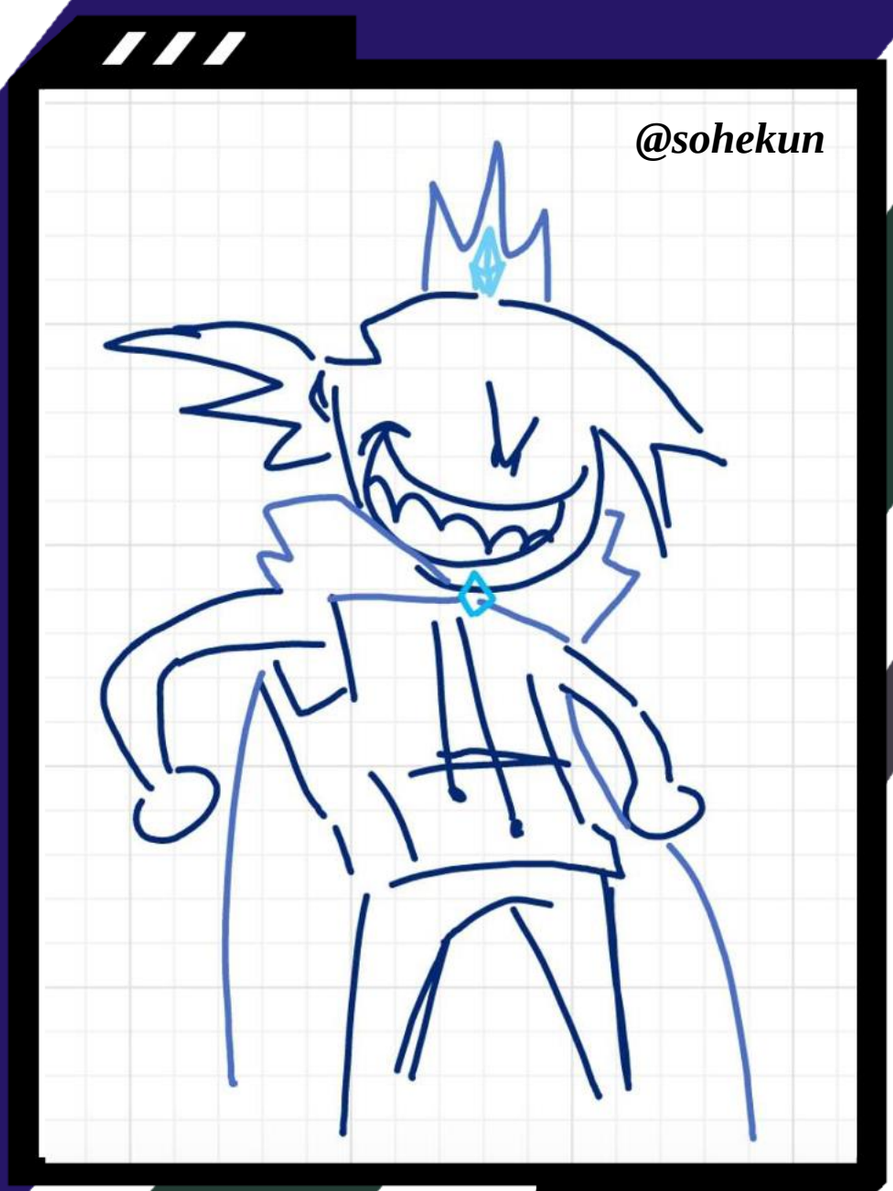
@fangnull

@Vidd03k

@sohekun

@fangnull
fishing
insert long text box of him ranting about this fish to her
omg fishi.....
planting!
Rosie
Baking!

@Hexxed_Out3


@sohekun

@sohekun
REMEMBER
HAVE FUN!

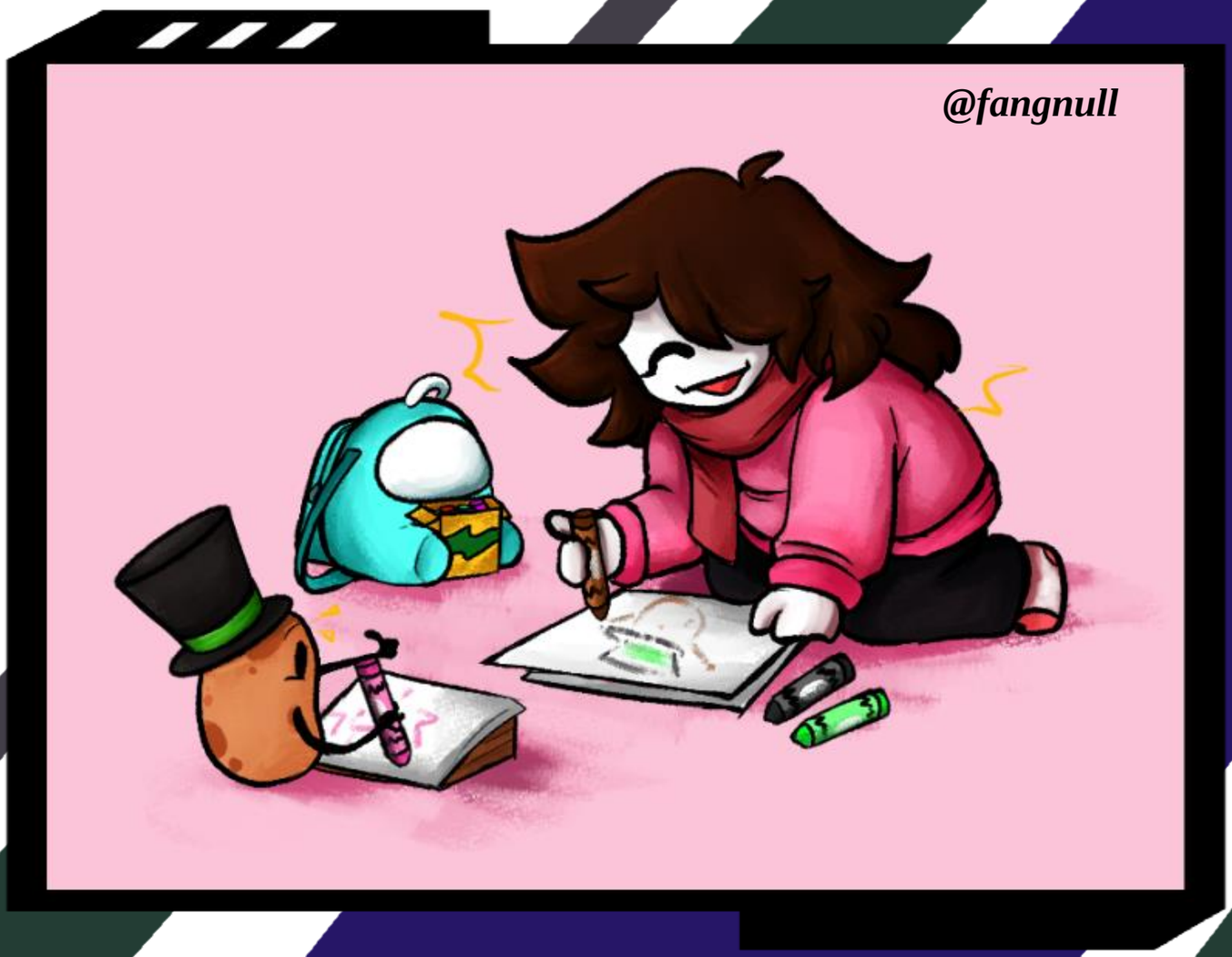
hliiiii!!!!!11!11
helo?!!!!?111
GHOSTIE

@sohekun

@Sonic32Super
MARKUS, I AM A BIT CONCERNED ABOUT THIS RECENT STOCK MARKET FIASCO
JOYCE WE RUIN PEOPLE'S LIVES
???
SPLENDID.

@Sonic32Super
KILL
YOURSELF

@sohekun
IM ABOUTTA
sis gonna Jayce everywhere
JOYCE!!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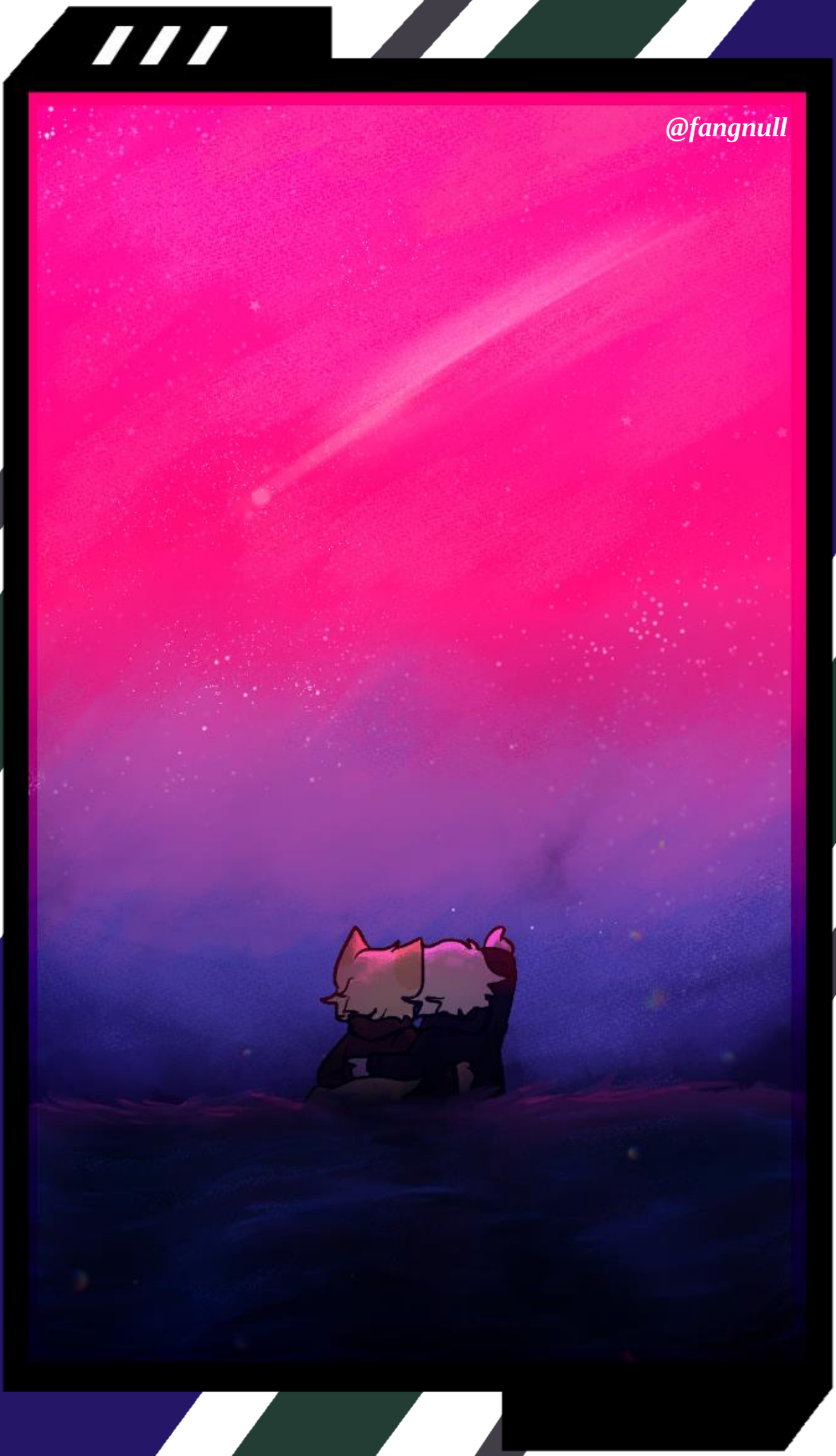
GAY
@Vidd03k


@fangnull

@Sonic32Super

@fangnull
416

@sohekun

@C0NST3LL4T1ON

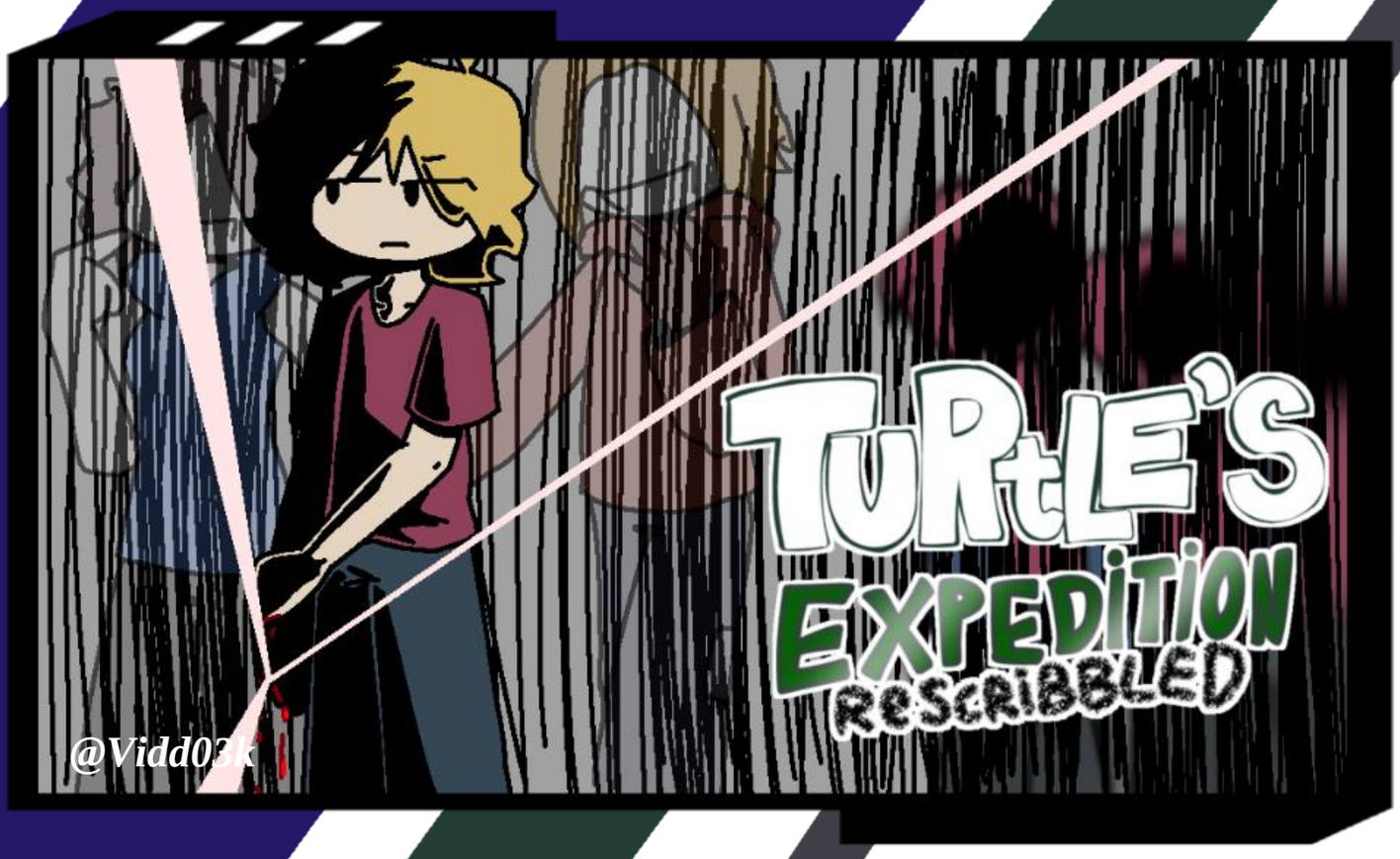
IMA GET YOU
THE
battle pass
teo
@Sonic32Super
IM SORRY
teo
you cant
gift with vbucks

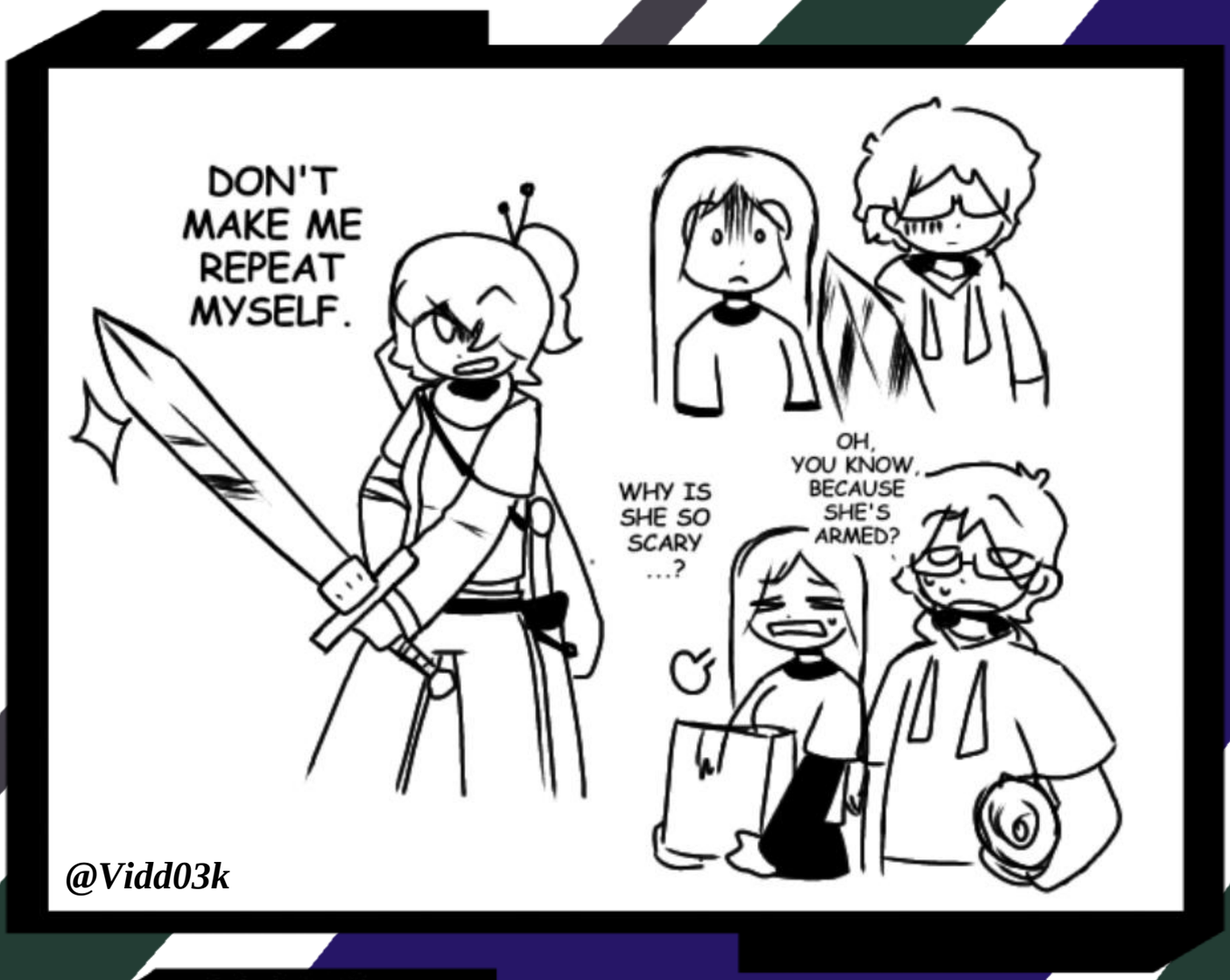
YOU KNOW, MAYBE USING VIOLENC ISN'T REALLY A GOOD IDEA
@Vidd03k
SIGH... BORING.
?
?
also Clara:
SURE THING MA'AM!

@Sonic32Super

@Vidd03k

@maxaff1


TURtLE'S
EXPEDITION
RESCRIBBLED
@Vidd03k


DON'T MAKE ME REPEAT MYSELF.
WHY IS SHE SO SCARY ...?
OH, YOU KNOW, BECAUSE SHE'S ARMED?
@Vidd03k

@Sonic32Super

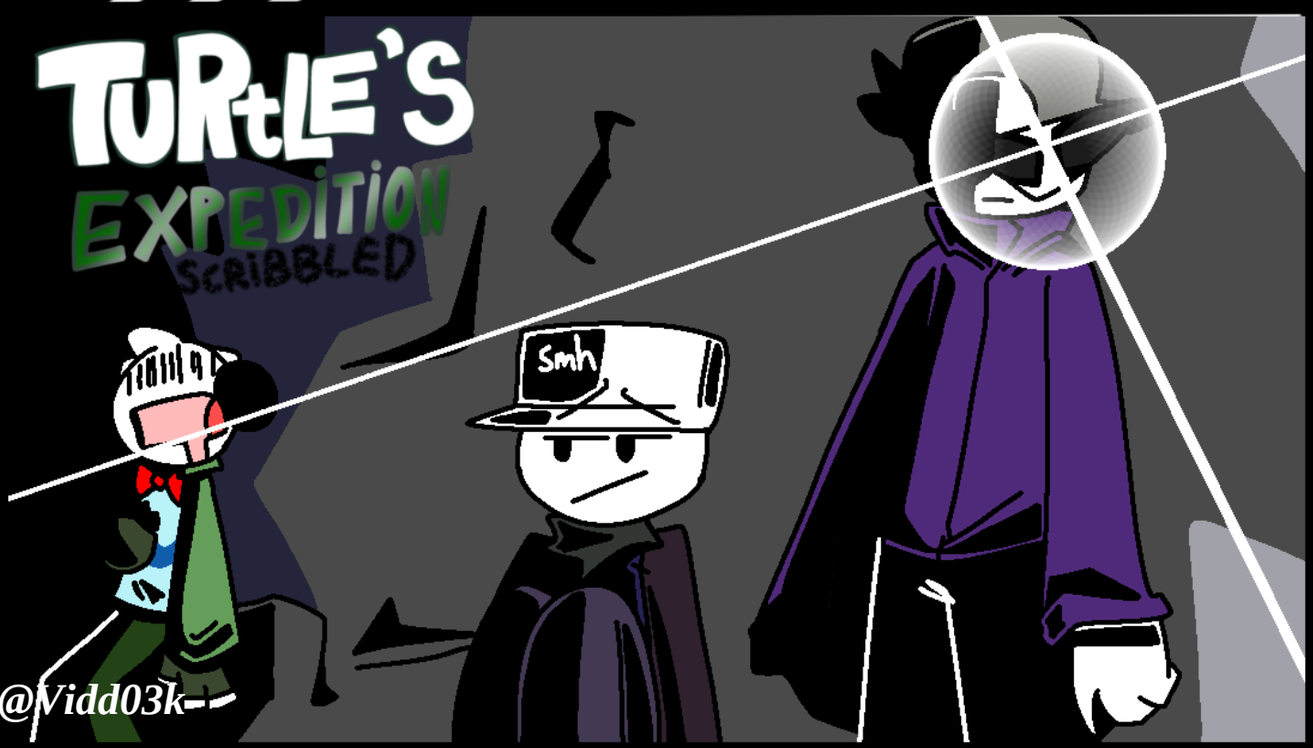
@fangnull

@fangnull

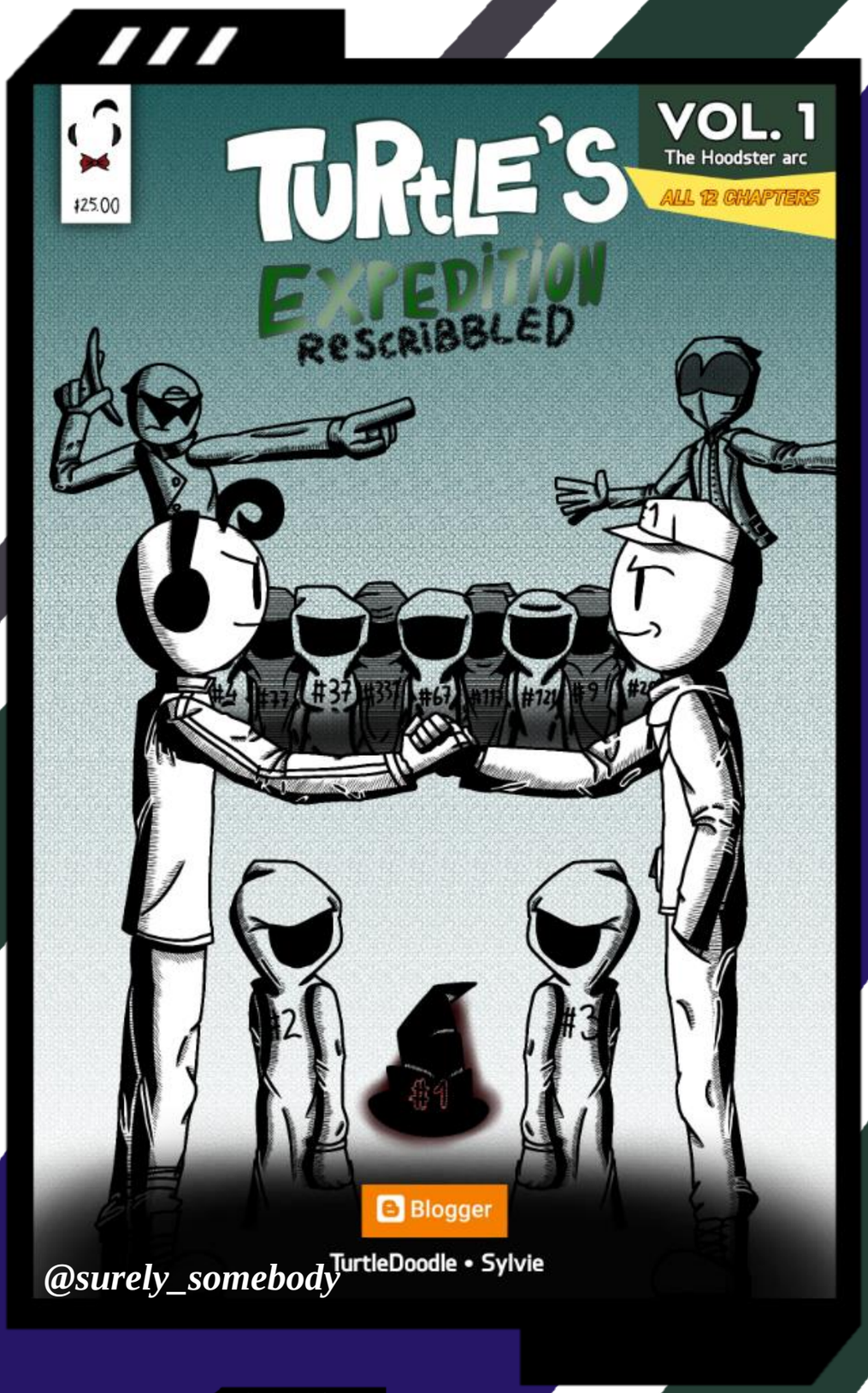
@sohekun
WHAT THEHECK IS THAT !?

@Sonic32Super

@Vaporizationer

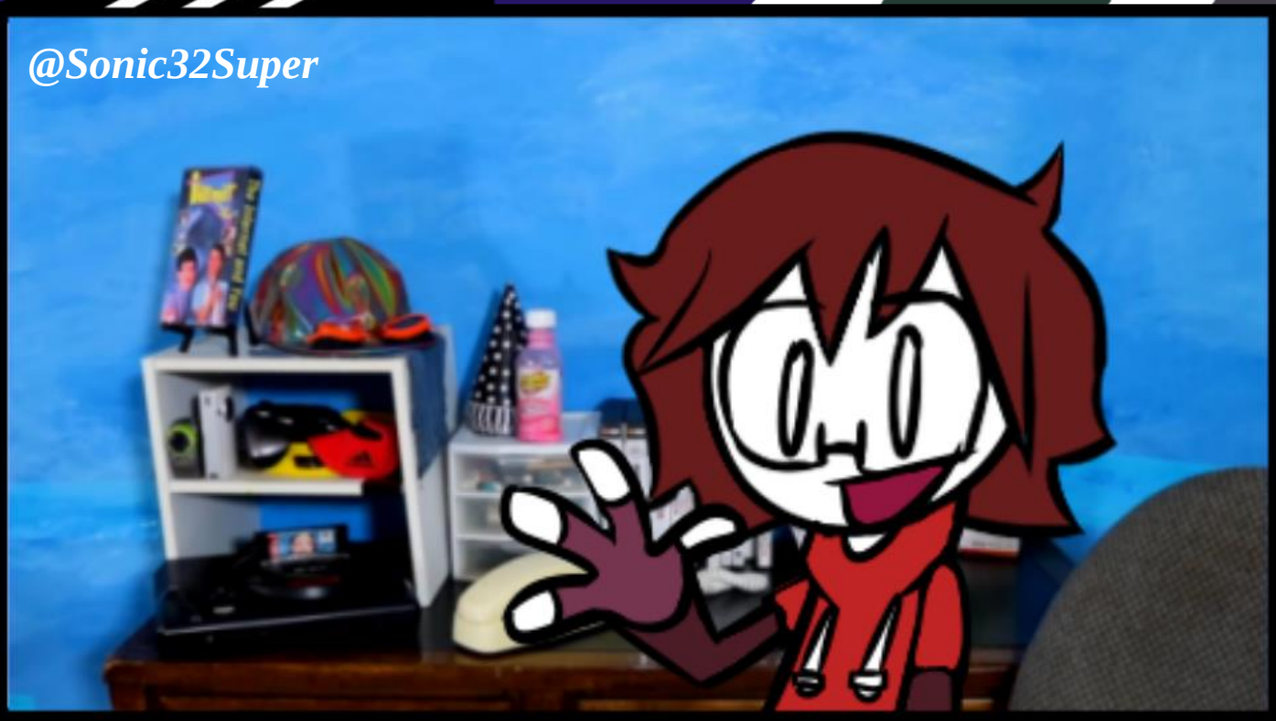


@Vidd03k--



@surely_somebody

SNOW/ALEX



@Sonic32Super

@C0NST3LL4T1ON
Congrats
On the Vol.2
Release!!
(Have fun reading)

WHAT'S NEXT?

With Volume 2 finally wrapping up, I would just like to thank everybody who stuck around with the series and its characters for all this time. It's been a pleasure working with the TER team on the project as well as making stories for the regular readers.

"Turtles Can't Run" blog page and the Carrd site will continue receiving chapters in the upcoming months but possibly in a more... time efficent way. I hope to see all of you continue reading and enjoy what me and my best friend cooked up for Arc 3.

(Big thanks to @surely_somebody for designing the series' logo. Also shoutouts to @sohekun for drawing the icons for the background extras.)

Speaking of which... you can also check out The KAME カメ Show, a podcast ran by me and @Vidd03k on my youtube channel! We talk about a bunch of media ranging from mainstream to obscure ones. We will occasionally talk about our own works on there as well!

Logo drawn by @sohekun

Give both of us a follow to keep up with any future news about our projects! It’s certainly going to be exciting!

And of course, as its tradition, Turtle peacin’ out!